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THE APOSTLES' CREED

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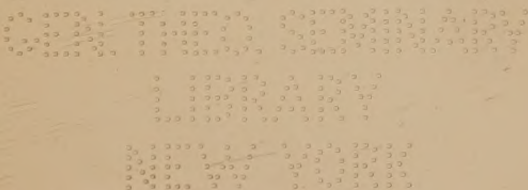
SERMONS

BY

ROBERT EYTON

RECTOR OF UPPER CHELSEA, PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S

SUB-ALMONER TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



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TO
THE VERY REVEREND
RICHARD W. CHURCH,

DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S,

TO WHOSE FRIENDSHIP AND EXAMPLE I OWE MORE
THAN WORDS CAN EXPRESS.

P R E F A C E.

THESE sermons were preached on Sunday evenings in the years 1888 and 1889, to such a mixed congregation as usually assembles in our West End churches at that service, and are published, with the aid of shorthand notes taken at the time, in deference to the wishes of many who heard them.

Their aim is to give such a simple exposition of the truths of the Baptismal Creed as may be useful to candidates for Confirmation, and to others who have not time or ability for the study of more profound works on the subject. In treating the earlier portions of the Creed, I have followed the general lines of the Bishop of Durham's "Historic Faith," a book which has been to me of inestimable value.

A further series on the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments is contemplated, if the success of this work seems to warrant it.

May 1, 1890.

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SERMON I.

THE NECESSITY FOR A CREED.

“Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”—ROM. vi. 17.

Is there any use in having a Creed such as the Apostles' Creed? Can it practically affect one's daily life? Very often we think of the Commandments as practical, but we look upon the Creed as being a document dealing only with certain abstract truths. I want to put before you some of the practical issues of that belief which we re-affirm every time we come to church, and many of us too when we say our private prayers. “I believe,” we say, “in God the Father . . . in God the Son . . . and in God the Holy Ghost. . . .” What is the result of that profession of belief? Is the result only that you do not think exactly as some other people think? or has this belief any greater result such as it ought to have—is it an inspiration for daily duty? Is it the guide of daily life? Are the facts about the Divine Life in which you express your belief every time that

you say the Apostles' Creed, facts that affect your daily life? If not, the Creed is of little use to you.

Now, the Creed which I have chosen to speak to you about—the Apostles' Creed—is the simplest one of the three in the Prayer-Book. It represents the baptismal Creed which grew up about the middle of the second century. It was called the "Apostles' Creed," because in substance it had come down from the Apostles, and because it contained the doctrine of the Apostles. There are portions of the Creed in the Epistles of St. Paul: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Three of the Articles of the Apostles' Creed are here put together as forming part of the teaching of St. Paul.

But it is a mistake to suppose, as it is sometimes supposed, that the Apostles' Creed was compiled in the apostolic age itself. It is a mistake, however, which any one can rectify for himself who looks at the internal statements of the Creed. The Apostles' Creed assumes a much more complete state of knowledge than would have been possible in those days; for instance, it recognizes that the Church was a living Body, spread over the world to a far greater extent than was the case in the apostolic age.

The Apostles' Creed, then, with some subsequent additions and alterations, represents substantially the baptismal Creed of the middle of the second century, and the doctrine of the Apostles.

Before I pass on to consider the propositions contained in the Creed, I want to direct your minds to the great necessity that exists for a Creed. For there are a great many people in these days who would quite agree in insisting on the importance of one's beliefs having a practical bearing on one's life, but who fail to see the necessity for any such formal statement of them as the Apostles' Creed supplies. Let us ask the question, then, first, Why is it necessary for us to have a Creed?

And the first reason I should give you is this: that every man who shapes his life in any decided fashion always bases it upon a creed, though it may not be a creed which he expresses in a form of words. Consciously or unconsciously every man who lives a strong life has a creed somewhere in the background, and it is through that creed that the strength of his life comes, and it is on adherence to that creed that the force of his life depends. For instance, there are a great many men in the present day whose creed, if they were to put it into words, would be, "I believe in money." That is a strong creed, and one which grows easily. "I believe in getting money; I believe

in getting all I can ; I believe in keeping it all to myself ;" and then, "I believe in getting it in any way I can." And though that is a very immoral creed, yet at the same time there are many outwardly successful lives that are based simply on that unconscious creed—getting all they can, keeping all they can for themselves, and lastly, getting it in any way they can. They believe in that, and their creed shapes their whole lives and drags them down, if they live in entire accord with it, to infinite degradation.

Then there is another class of men who have a higher kind of creed—the men who believe in knowledge, men who believe in material improvement—men who believe in making things better in this world, whether they are secularists or not. Many an earnest Christian believes in making things better by the advance of knowledge. And strong men acting upon this creed are throwing their energies every day into the bettering of the conditions of life. The creed of their life is, "I believe in trying to make things better in 'this world, I believe in knowledge, I believe in material improvement."

In these and other cases you will find that strength for good or for evil is all based on some creed in which a man has learnt to believe, and which shapes his life and moulds his nature, though he may never put it into words.

And so the Christian has a creed—a creed about God, a written creed. He does not have an opinion about God, nor does he merely believe that there is a God, still less that there may be a God ; but he believes in God, he believes in One Who is and reigns and loves, and in Whom all that is good is embodied. The facts that he himself will die, and that others do not believe as he does, do not affect this belief of his ; he believes in God apart from himself, apart from all men's ideas about Him—in God—in the Good—alone unchangeable and unchanged. And then because this God in Whom he believes is unseen, he feels obliged to put his belief into words. That is the reason for having a definite form of words. You do not want such a form of words to enable you to say that you believe in money. But God is invisible, and we, being sense-bound creatures, need a form of words to remind ourselves of that which is invisible ; we need a form of words that will make out for us, so to speak, that which we cannot see. We need a form of words that can claim their place among the powers of our life, and therefore we have a creed about God as a necessary support for ourselves. It is quite true that if God were here on earth, and were able to be seen by men, it would not be necessary to have a creed to remind ourselves or others of facts about Him ; but since God is invisible, our belief about Him

must inevitably express itself in a certain form of words, and for this reason the Christian Church has a Creed, has words to define her Faith.

Again, the Creed is a necessity, because we want something apart from what is visible and palpable ; some inner bond to knit us together in one Church, some sign of conscious fellowship with our fellow-men. Very often our fellow-man is thrown into apparent antagonism with us ; he is a rival in business or he gets the place which we want. We may put away all angry feelings, yet there is the feeling that he is a rival. These rivalries have their good side, but if there were only these competitions and differences, and if there were nothing deeper which might bind us together, then the world would be a much more divided place than it is. There are, thank God, many softening influences. Among others, a common Faith has brought men together who seemed to be hopelessly separated by family or political differences. God's revelation has been seen by them to be the foundation of real life, and they have felt that in the deepest things they were one, though in many other matters they might seem to be divided. Therefore it is that God's revelation, formulated as far as it can be in the Creed, is a perpetual means of bringing men together whom other differences tend to separate. In every congregation—in this congregation—when we

say the Creed, we are all binding ourselves together, not only to God, but to one another. We all say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth," and we are thereby perpetually reminded how far greater are these facts concerning the life of God which keep us together, than the little things that keep us apart.

Then another reason why the Creed is a necessity is that it binds us fast to the historical Church of Christ. The Creed is a sort of epitome of the faith of the past. I, in this Church, may be a very humble and insignificant person, yet, when I say the Creed, I unconsciously or consciously take upon my lips, and profess my belief in, those same truths for which the martyrs shed their blood ; I take on my lips and attest my belief in those truths which have given birth to so much that was splendid and heroic and ideal in all the ages since Christ came. To say the Creed, is to attest the fact that we are one with those who have "inherited the promises."

Once more. The Creed is necessary to help us to read the Bible. The Bible is not a single book ; it is a collection of books, and the Bible, as a book, does not tell its own story. Take the New Testament. In it we have the Gospels and the Epistles, the Acts and the Revelation, all bound together. A plain man opens the New Testament, and he

comes across a sentence which he does not understand, or he is puzzled because he thinks that one passage contradicts another. He wants a system of clues to find his way through the Bible and to connect one passage with another, and that is what the Creed gives us. It gives us something more than barren speculation about mysteries that are beyond us altogether. It keeps us from the tortures of that text-worry, which is a common form of religious malady. I mean this: a man gets hold of one text, and he says, "I find so and so in the Bible," and he argues himself nearly into unbelief, because he cannot reconcile that text with another. Text-worry is a very dangerous form of religious disease. The man who keeps firm hold on the Creed and uses it as a guide in reading the Bible, is saved from this disease. For these reasons, because the Creed deals with the unseen, because it binds us together, and binds us to the past, and because it furnishes clues for reading the Bible—for these four reasons, the Creed is a most precious possession. '

Then I would say just two words about the characteristics of the Apostles' Creed.

First, it must have struck you how intensely personal it is. It does not say, "I believe that there is a God, I believe that the Holy Spirit is in the world," but it says, what is more full and deep, "I

believe in God," "I believe in Jesus Christ," "I believe in the Holy Ghost." To believe that there is a doctor up the street who might cure you, and to believe in a doctor, are quite different things. You can recognize the difference directly. So, to believe that there is a God is one thing—"the devils also believe and tremble"—but to believe in God is quite another. To believe in God is to trust God, and to feel at home with God, to recognize that, even though all else may perish, yet His own children need fear nothing. To believe in God is to believe that there is One in Whom you may have—what you feel at times is the one paramount necessity—the most certain and the most unutterable confidence. "I believe in God." Never let us unconsciously fall down to saying merely, "I believe that there is a God, and that He will some day show Himself," but let us consciously maintain, "I believe in God," in One Who loves me, and "in Whom I live and move and have my being." That is one great value of the Creed, that it is intensely personal.

Then the other great characteristic of the Creed is its historical account of the work of God. It is not an abstract account of it, nor a mere description, but an historical account of it. God is the "Maker of heaven and earth." And so with the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He "was conceived by the Holy

Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried." That historical account gives you the knowledge of Christ's work on earth, it gives you facts to go upon, and from having those facts to go upon, life comes to you. You must have the knowledge of the facts first, and then comes inspiration, and so you are enabled to listen to God's voice and to offer to God prayers, not because of some abstract truths about Him, but because He did something, because of what the Creed tells you that He did. The Creed teaches you much more than to believe in a certain state of things, it teaches you to believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and it teaches you to believe that each of the Three Persons has done or manifested certain things, which things are facts of history as real as any other facts; and in that lies its main strength as an inspiration for daily duty.

SERMON II.

BELIEF IN GOD.

“To us there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him.”—I COR. viii. 6.

THE Apostles' Creed sets God before us as a living Person. We do not begin by saying, “I believe that there is a God,” but we begin by saying, “I believe in God,” *i.e.* in One on Whom we can throw ourselves for guidance and support. And when the Creed passes from the Person of God, it does not affirm a number of abstract things about Him. We do not say, “I believe that God is powerful,” or “I believe that God is good,” or “I believe that God is great,” but it tells us what God has done, and then, without trying to describe Him, leaves us to conceive for ourselves what He is. This is no trifling distinction. If the Creed simply told us a number of abstract things about God—that He was just, or that He was good, or that He was pure, or that He was a Spirit—it would leave us in that dim region in which

abstract conceptions do leave nine-tenths of mankind. But just because it does not try to describe God, but tells us what God has done and is doing and will do, and leaves us face to face with that record, it enables us to rise to some true idea of Him.

The Creed, then, tells us of God, Who has created us ; it tells us of God, Who has redeemed us ; it tells us of God, Who sanctifies us. And as our knowledge of life grows, and as we understand better what is meant by being created and redeemed and sanctified, so our conception of God, Who created and redeemed and sanctifies us, grows too. The child says the Apostles' Creed, it learns it by heart—and it cannot do a better thing ; but its conception of the meaning of the words must be limited and narrow. For we are so constituted that we cannot penetrate the inner depths of Divine truth until we begin to live upon it to a certain extent, and only by living upon it can we ever penetrate its full meaning. There is as much difference between the seed and the full-blown flower, as there is between the conception which the child attaches to the expressions of the Apostles' Creed, and the conception of the full-grown man or woman who has suffered and learned the lessons which suffering alone can teach. You learn the Creed in childhood, and then you pass on to learning all the other lessons that

life has to teach; and when, after long years, you look back, you find in the same words that you lisped as a child, and in which you found then but little meaning, that which has answered to the deepest experiences of your life. That is what is so wonderful about these short and simple sentences. The old man who is dying and the child who says the Catechism say the same words; and to the child they mean little more than a lesson, while to the old man they mean so much. All the experience, and sorrow, and trial, and heart-searching of his life has gone, so to speak, into the words, and the meaning has been beaten out of them, as it were, by the hammer of his life; and that meaning is to him vivid and clear beyond expression—he feels that they enter into and clear up every atom of his experience.

Now, take these simple words of the Creed: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.” Why is it that we believe in God? “I believe in God,” we say. What do we mean, first of all? Take the most simple and most elementary thoughts. We believe in Some One greater than ourselves—Some One greater than any man who has ever lived in our world, or than any possible man; we believe in a larger, fuller Presence around us than can be seen or known; we believe in a greater love than the tenderest love that father, or

mother, or husband, or brother, or friend has ever bestowed upon us on this earth. We believe in a Presence all round us, always with us—a Presence which we can think about, and in a certain way can feel—for even children can feel it—but of which we cannot prove the reality, because no proof is possible. We can think about God's Presence, we can feel God's Presence ; but we cannot prove it, we cannot measure it by the reason—it is beyond us. We feel in our best moments that there is One Who loves us tenderly and entirely, Whose Presence is awful and yet sweet ; and our hearts go out to Him, and we are certain that there is a God. We are as certain of that fact as we are of the fact that we stand where we do. We are certain that God is here ; that God hears us as we speak, and sees us as we live ; “that all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.” This is quite clear to us at some moments, but some scoffing atheist comes along, and says, “Prove to me that there is a God ; prove it to me in the same way that you would prove that two and two make four—by demonstration ; prove it to me as you prove the propositions of Euclid ;” and you have to answer, “I cannot, and you know that as well as I do ; no man can prove it, nor ever did, nor ever will.” And even more : it is a great danger to try to prove it, or to think that other

people's faith depends upon your proving it satisfactorily to them. Their faith depends upon no proofs you can furnish, but upon their being true to their deepest instincts. For the deepest instinct that we have, if we listen to it, tells us that God is. We hear men described as atheists, *i.e.* as intellectually convinced that there is no God. The spread of this intellectual atheism is often represented to be the great danger of our day. It is discussed at Church Congresses and Diocesan Conferences, and all sorts of remedies are proposed. But there is an atheism far more serious and dangerous in its effects than any intellectual atheism, and that is, the atheism of the heart. There may be people who worship in our churches, there may be people who go to the Holy Communion, who are atheists in heart all the time. They do not believe in a God Who loves them, and that is being an atheist in heart. They believe in a Being Who is very strong, a Being Who is very powerful, a Being Who is very savage, a Being Who is very cruel—at least they would count Him so if He were a man—a Being out of Whose sight they want to get, a Being Whom they conceive of as always on the watch for what they do wrong; but they do not believe in God. This is the worst atheism—the atheism of Christians, the atheism of people who worship often in Christian Churches.

They have grown up under a terrible shadow; they do not see, and it is hard to make them see, the Father's love.

Then there is another sort of atheism—the atheism of wilful recklessness, the recklessness which says, “Whether there be a God or no, I will not care; I will do what I like. I am grown up, and my life is in my own hands; I can do as I like, and I will throw my life away. I will not mind what any one says to me; I will let myself go, I will sink to the level of the beasts.” There is the atheism of the will, and a terrible thing it is.

These are the worst dangers—the pressing evils. But as to the atheism of the intellect which says it cannot believe because it cannot prove that there is a God—the atheism which is supposed to be rife among the artisans of our country, there is, I believe, very little to fear about its ultimate result. For however much he may hide it from himself, what is for ever certain is that at the bottom man wants God. And so it is that when we say, “I believe in God the Father,” we feel at once that this answers to something which we want—it answers to the primary and the most elementary wants of our nature. It answers first of all to our natural curiosity. We want to know. Every little child wants to know the meaning of things, and therefore it asks you all sorts of

questions, and sometimes asks questions which it puzzles you to answer; it sees something, and its little mind is all on the rack to get behind the appearances of things, and to understand what they mean; and you are never perhaps better occupied than when you are trying to explain to him the meaning of things. For this curiosity of the child to pass beyond the seen into the unknown, is the first and primary element of that child's belief in God. It asks questions and tries to get behind the outside of things, and that is the witness to its need for God, to its need for Him Who is behind what it can see and touch, and Who alone can give the key and the explanation of things around us.

And then we go on to the next stage. After curiosity there comes aspiration in some form or other. No man lives to be twenty without there rising up within him a wish to be better, to get beyond the sort of general life he lives, the sort of life which consists in going from pleasure to work, and from work to pleasure, from bed to work, and from work to bed, and so on. A man may have to live that sort of life, and to be content with it as a rule, but every now and then there comes some sort of dissatisfaction, some wish to rise above it; that wish is the raw material of aspiration, it is a witness in man that he really believes in God, that he wants to rise above

this common monotony, this trivial round of things. And as he advances and sees things becoming more real to him, above all, when that great teacher Trouble lays its hand upon him, then he becomes conscious of the witness within him to his own utter loneliness. In his inmost self man feels and knows and confesses in his deepest moments that though he has love bestowed on him which he is intensely thankful for, yet that even that love fails to touch some of the deepest springs within him ; for he wants above all else a home—a home in which he can really unbosom himself, a home in which he shall be known even as he really is, a home such as he does not find in any thing here on earth. And the Creed meets this deepest want of all. It says to us, You have a home, you have a Father ; it teaches us to say, “I believe in God the Father.” So it is that everything within us carries us to the Father—to God. Just as the flower turns to the sun so we turn towards God. Suggestions come to us about God in all sorts of ways ; they come from the Bible, from sermons, from thoughts that come in the dead of night. Suggestions come from arguments, but suggestions are not arguments. No arguments create the idea of God, and no arguments prove that God is a real Being. When the revelation is made we look into ourselves, and we see that there is that in us which wants, which

demands this God. We understand "there is but one God, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we in Him."

Brethren, do we believe in God? Let us ask ourselves to-night that question, Do we believe in God? Is His Presence a restraint upon us when we are alone? Do we say our prayers as really if we are alone in a room with God as we should if some one we loved and respected—some fellow-creature—were watching us? Is God a reality to us? Is the thought of His Presence an inspiration? Is God to us what He wills to be to us—the influence that shapes our life? Do we, to put it most simply, think first, 'What shall I like to do, what will please myself?' or have we learnt from the Creed to think first 'What will please God?'

SERMON III.

GOD THE FATHER.

“ Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”—ST. JOHN xiv. 8, 9.

“SHOW us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” The words represent the great longing cry of generations uttered in such various tones, met by such strange expedients. Among the old religious pagans the demand was met by the figure of Jupiter, father of gods and men, but around him there clustered ideas utterly destructive of the fatherly relation.

Another attempt to meet the same demand was made by the early philosophers, who spoke of a deity as in some sense a father linked to us by creation, but their notion of him is summed up by the ablest of them in such words as these, that “it is hard to gain a knowledge of Him, and impossible to communicate it to the world.” The same demand meets us in those great Hebrew prophets; you catch again

and again the undertone of the same request, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," in their conception of God, as the Father of Israel training and guiding His chosen race. But they died without the full vision of the Father that meets us in the Gospel. At last the revelation of the Father so earnestly longed for came in the Gospel of Christ. The central message of that Gospel is that the Father can be known in the Son. The life of Christ upon earth, while it is the answer to many other demands of human nature, is the answer above all to this demand, which was the earliest and remained the most incessant, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" that life is the answer because, in His own words, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." In the life of Christ, then, there is—unexhausted and inexhaustible—the revelation of the Father. First of all the Son reveals the Father in this great sense, that He, being the Son, shows us how the element of Fatherhood, so to speak, can exist in the Godhead. He shows us how there may be even in that highest possible union of the Three Eternal Persons an element corresponding to our highest idea of fatherhood. But besides revealing this mystery He shows further to us the character of the Father, and His attitude towards men. In the prevailing features of our Lord's life, in the power of the life laid down

and taken again, in the unfaltering Will, in the conquest of death, in the love that is shown in the opening of heaven, we can see a manifestation of the power and the will and the love of the Father. In the life laid down and taken again, in that wondrous victory over death, in the gates of heaven thrown open to all believers, there is written up as it were before you : ‘ This is the Will of the Father concerning you. He it is Who has power over death. He it is Who can give to His children power to lay down their own lives, and to take them again. He it is Whose Will is that none shall perish—that this ultimate thing which we call Death shall be conquered and finally overcome. He it is Who stretches out His arms to all mankind, Who opens the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.’ In the Person of Christ, and in the prevailing features of the life of Christ, there shines forth the vision of the Father, a vision which gives your faith an object, so that it no longer gropes vaguely in the dark, but has a definite object on which to dwell.

“ Lord, show us the Father.” We feel certain when we think of it, that there must be an answer to this demand. Men could not be satisfied with one like themselves, with an Almighty Man, who should after all be discovered to have the same passions, the same revengeful feelings as they had hated in them-

selves ; men could not be satisfied with hearing about an abstraction concerning which somehow and under some possible conditions in another world they might get to know more ; but when men saw shining through the character and life of Christ a Personal Being with power unlimited for good, with a will positively unhindered by any lack of power, and with a love towards men as tender as it is unchanging, then at last faith gained distinctness, and service gained a motive.

So we say, "I believe in God the Father." And that confession satisfies the wants of man, for what man wants is, not only to be told that there is a God, not only to be told even that in God we "live and move and have our being," but to be told also what the attitude of that God towards His creatures really is. "Sic Deus dilexit mundum," "So God loved the world," is the Divine message ; "I believe in God the Father" is the Church's answer.

And yet most blessed as that revelation is to each for himself, no one can stop in it, for "no man can live unto himself." You come, perhaps, slowly and by degrees to it ; you wander about among all sorts of religious systems, and only after long wanderings and after trying to find rest in theories and speculations, you come to the knowledge of One Whom you can feel and know to be the Father—One, Who to

you is not only an object of the greatest reverence, but an object also of the most unfaltering trust. It comes perhaps slowly, very slowly, but it does come at last. But when you have found all the blessed peace and comfort that is to be found in the consciousness of the Fatherhood of God, then there arise one after another those imperious questions which will be answered, and those difficulties which, somehow or other, must be satisfied. If this revelation of the Father be a reality, how is it that the world around me is as it is? Why are these tyrannical oppressions allowed by Him? Why does this Father entrust His own children to such inhuman monsters? Why does this one's life begin so well and fall off so grievously? Whence these terrible stories of a sin that seems as if it were an outcome of necessity in those who commit it? Can it be true that there are some who come into this world so heavily weighted by hereditary predisposition as to be "delivered to do these iniquities?" How is it that the best men often seem to lose their way,

"That the highest suffer most,
That the strongest wander farthest,
And most hopelessly are lost?"

If we are to believe in God so as to rest in the thought of Him, we must have some sort of answer to such questions as these.

And so the Creed goes on, "I believe in God the Father Almighty," or, as it were better translated, All-Sovereign. The idea conveyed by the word "Almighty" is too much an idea of abstract power to represent adequately the original. Many of our people, I fear, form an unreal conception of God by dwelling on this idea of Almightyness as they conceive of it. God is not Almighty in the sense that He can do everything, for He can do nothing to contradict Himself. It is better to guard our conception of God by thinking of Him as All-Sovereign, not as One Who has merely almighty power in the abstract, but as One Who sways by His Will the course of the world around—as the Ruler to Whom the hearts of His children can turn with confidence amid the sorrows, and sufferings, and miseries, and perplexities, and darkness that surround them, Who is not only the Father Who satisfies their personal wants, but is also the Ruler of the world, the All-Sovereign.

There is no faith that is harder to grasp than this. The world is full of confusions and perplexities, of undeserved miseries and hopeless wrongs. We must not do what pious people sometimes do, we must not put them down to God and say, "God sent these confusions, God ordained these woes and evils." We must have a higher and a greater faith, and say, "God, for some great and wise reason utterly beyond us,

permits these things to happen up to a certain point, and at that point so wonderful is His power that, even out of these things which seem to us so dark and so cruel, He works some higher thing which otherwise could not have happened."

There is a great and real distinction between the common idea of God as "Almighty," that is to say, God Who sets everything in the world going exactly as it is, Who is supposed to send every kind of evil, and the idea of God Who rules above as the All-Sovereign, and Who, though for wise purposes which we cannot fully discern He allows a certain amount of evil in the world, yet continually overrules this evil for higher good, continually even out of the results of evil brings some greater good. The distinction is a real one. It is quite one thing to believe that God allows evil in the world for some greater good, and quite another to believe that God is the author of everything which is bad in the world. It is one thing to believe in God's ultimate control, and quite another to believe in God's immediate responsibility for everything that happens. The mistake, as it seems to me, that religious people so often make, is that they talk of the Will of God so carelessly, as though it were God's Will that initiated and carried through every little incident that happens in the world. They seem to forget the fact that there is a power working in

the world against God ; that the results of its working are seen in death, and sickness, and trouble. They ascribe all misfortune to the Will of God, and go perilously near to describing Him as the author of evil. Such dangers would be avoided if they grasped the idea conveyed under the word All-Sovereign. Ultimate control does not involve immediate initiation. The Bible seems to me to be very clear about this, to recognize as plainly as possible the presence of a world-sovereign, "the prince of the power of the air," as St. Paul calls him, who is able to inflict a certain amount of physical and—as you cannot separate the physical from the mental—of mental suffering also. The Bible seems clear about our having to "wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The Bible never seems to me to attribute the work done by these powers to the All-good God. On the other hand, the Bible is equally clear about this, that, in spite of this permission which allows those evil forces to work, God's ultimate control remains untouched, that He "ordereth all things in heaven and earth." * While God cannot be said to initiate each particular thing that happens, yet He has an overruling power so that nothing is ever done by the

* Collect for the eighth Sunday after Trinity.

powers of evil which He is not able to cause to "work together for good to those that love God." This is our answer when it is scoffingly said, "It is very well for you to have the satisfaction of your personal wants in knowing and loving God as a Father, but look at the unrestrained tyranny and cruelty, look at the successful wrongs which mark the world's history; how do you reconcile such things with your faith in Him as the Father?" The answer is that, while we do not pretend to explain these things, as they happen, or to be able to show the end of each of them, we nevertheless carry our hopes forward, and we rest them on the ultimate working out of the All-Sovereign Will, against which no evil thing can finally prevail. "I believe in God the Father the All-Sovereign," is our confession in the face of surrounding evils.

The early Christians stopped there. They felt the necessity of satisfying their first personal want—to know God as a Father; they felt it necessary to satisfy the first question which would be asked by the social instinct, viz. "What am I to say about the trouble in the world around me?" But they did not feel the further necessity of any answer to the question, "What, then, about the material creation around us?" Yet there is a wonderful and a beautiful completeness in this last clause of the first

Article of the Creed: "Maker of heaven and earth." It links us so wonderfully to the whole creation around us. To many of us it would be a great sorrow to think that after this life we are for ever entirely and hopelessly to be separated from that animal world, in which many of the deepest of our interests are to be found now. It would seem so strange to us to think that man should have this world as his home, and should form those wonderful and beautiful relations with many of the animals below him that he now does, and that afterwards, in the new earth, these relations should cease, and that God is then to be looked on henceforth as the God of human beings only, and not of the animal and vegetable creation. From this point of view this last clause seems to me to bring so many deep thoughts to us, that ought to help us about our whole relations to the animal and vegetable worlds. To remember that God made all these things, is to remember that they all have their separate places in the Love of God. Surely that ought to govern us in our relations towards them; surely it makes us love what we love in the world—animals and all things which have a lower life—in a new way, if we think of them as being also loved by God Himself. We think of animals as being objects of God's creative Love, and at once it puts us in a new relation towards

them. It gives us a new hope about their future ; it gives us a glimpse of that tremendous hope which seems to have taken hold of the mind of St. Paul and to have helped him to see how the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God,"—how all those great and wonderful scenes which display the vastness of natural forces look forward in their grandeur and beauty and vastness to the time when man shall not only be, but be declared to be, the son of that Father Who is at once All-Sovereign and the "Maker of heaven and earth."

SERMON IV.

JESUS CHRIST.

“To us there is . . . one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him.”—I COR. viii. 6.

WE have been trying to gain distinctness in our conception of God. There are, however, two great dangers which attend such an attempt, and which we must guard against. One is, lest by trying to gain distinctness, we should limit our idea of God. We gain no true clearness by trying to limit the illimitable. There is a tendency in some quarters to speak of God as though He were one of ourselves, as though He were ‘a man in the next street’*—a Being Whom we know all about and can describe with perfect accuracy. There is something very deplorable in such attempts. If God is in one sense near, in another He is infinitely unapproachable. In one sense He is easy to be told of, and yet in another so past finding out that “every confession seems to claim as its sequel a space of silent adoration.” †

* Cf. “Literature and Dogma,” by M. Arnold.

† Westcott’s “Historic Faith.”

Then there is another danger—the danger of a subtle agnosticism; the danger lest we should say, as we cannot know everything, therefore we can know nothing about God; lest we should consign Him to the dim land of insoluble mystery; lest we should think that any definite thought about Him which we could have would be altogether misleading. With the sense of these dangers, let us pass on. Even when we have gained that distinctness that is to be gained in our conception of God by thinking of Him as the All-Father, as the All-Sovereign, and as the Creator of heaven and earth, and so have linked ourselves together with Him and with one another and with the whole animal creation, there still comes another demand from the heart of man, which says in effect, ‘Bring God into the actual life of man.’

And that is the demand which Christ met in His life. God came into the actual life of man; God came into the actual life which you and I are living now; God was born in it; God became a baby, a child, a man; God worked and spoke as other men; God was in the cradle; God suffered; God died; God came into life, and actually lived as a man and made Himself one of us. Ah! our Lord knew quite well, and understood quite well, this demand of the heart. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” God has come into

actual life, and that dimness and that mystery which always must belong to the idea of God, whatever distinctness we may gain about Him—that dimness and that mystery has had a new light shed upon it by the actual life of God upon earth. “I believe in God; I believe also in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord.”

And that is the statement which I want you to think of. It means a great deal to us; it is difficult indeed to say how much it does mean. “I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord;” that is to say, “I believe that this desire of men that God’s life should become actualized in the life of man has been granted. I believe that God has been seen upon this earth; I believe that God, when He was seen upon this earth, was called man by men, and yet at the same time was owned by those who knew Him as the Son of God. I believe, that is to say, in this Person Who was called Jesus Christ; and I believe in something about the Nature of that Person—I believe He was and is the Son of God, and therefore our Lord.”

Let us consider to-night the first of these things. “I believe,” we say, “in Jesus Christ.” The very words are a creed in themselves, for the name Jesus Christ is more than a name; more, *i.e.*, than a mere label such as names are now; it denotes a

Divine office. "I believe," we say in effect, "that the Jesus Who was known in this world, Who was born, and lived, and suffered, and died, was the Christ, the Messiah, the Hope of the world." So that this faith really includes two things: "I believe in Jesus, Who was a true man, not a phantasm or an appearance of man, but a true man, Who was born, and lived, and ate, and drank, and suffered, and died like other men; and I believe that He was the Christ, that is to say, the Messiah, the Hope of the world."

Now, as to the first of those two things, no question that is worth our consideration is raised by any one as to our belief in Jesus, as an historical Personage. Even those who reject His Divine claims are not backward in confessing their belief in His character—nay, indeed, they often use the most glowing language about His unsullied goodness. But the question which really lies behind this Article of the Creed is, not the question of the goodness of this historic Person Who lived and died, and Who was called "Jesus," but whether He Who thus lived and died is rightly called "Christ," the Messiah, the Hope of the world. And herein we discern the reason for the immense importance attached by our Lord to St. Peter's confession of Him. The disciples had been calling Him by all sorts of names—"Sir," and "Master," and the word that we translate

"Lord," which really means little more than Master also. At last the time came when they had grown so as to be able to meet the question, "But whom say ye that I am?" And the answer came true and real: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Had Peter said, "Thou art Jesus," he would have said no more than if he had said "Thou art Joshua;" he would have said no more than any other man who knew Christ's name would have said; but because he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," our Lord broke out into that promise, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock" (that is to say, on this confession of Me as the Christ) "I will build My Church." "Thou art the Christ," said Peter. "Thou art He Whom the prophets foretold, He to Whom all the holy men of old looked forward, Whom prophets and kings desired to see, to Whom the whole history of the Jewish race, as rightly understood, looked forward and pointed as its one end. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The hidden meaning of all Jewish history, of all the Old Testament, lies in that one confession; the words fulfil, as it were, the whole expectation of the Old Testament. It is a wonderful thing to think

that the world existed for thousands of years, and that all the time everything that happened, directly or indirectly, was pointing on to one issue, and that when "the fulness of time was come" that issue could be summed up and be expressed in the short words—"Thou art the Christ." All the preparation of the Jewish people, by their dominion over other people, by their sufferings, by their exile, by that isolation from other people which must have been so difficult, all that they had learned by the restraints of those laws which were thrown around them like a fence, all that they had learned from the spiritual enthusiasm of prophet after prophet as they spoke to them,—all came, so to speak, to a head in that one confession, "Thou art the Christ," the Hope of all those who have lived and worked and suffered in the past.

It is hard for us to see the importance of this confession of Peter's ; it has all become so familiar to us. We use the name "Christ" just as easily as we use the name "Jesus ;" we speak of our Lord ordinarily as "Christ." We do not think when we say, "I believe in Jesus Christ," that in saying those two words we mean such exceedingly different things ; that one of them tells us so much more than the other. The name "Jesus" had been borne before ; it had been borne by one of God's most distinguished

servants, by the Joshua who led Israel, and by others. But the word "Christ," in the way in which St. Peter used it, is a name by itself—is a name which tells of the fulfilment of all the promises made by God since the days of Abraham.

This, then, is what we mean when we say we believe in Jesus, the Christ, as the apostles proclaimed Him to be. We believe that God fulfilled His promises, not as men expected, but in reality. We believe that Jesus was Christ. But we know, too, the blindness which did not own Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Splendid as Israel's position was, great as its office was, Israel did not believe. The revelation came, the promises were fulfilled, the Lord wrought the works expected of the Messiah ; but He did not work them in the fashion which that generation expected, or chose to expect, and the Lord forced belief in Himself upon no man. He left the minds of those who chose to reject Him in their self-chosen isolation. He welcomed the confession of His real office when it came—welcomed it in a way which showed how important it was to that nation of which he that made it was the spokesman. He welcomed that confession as a direct revelation from the Father. But the record of this rejection remains : "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

And, brethren, the case is so still. Blindness is a characteristic of many in the Church to-day. Men challenge us and say—"Prove to us that Jesus is the Christ; prove it to us in the same way that you prove to us an arithmetical problem; prove it to us in the same way that you prove some proposition in science." We answer, "In those ways there is no proof; 'Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto us, but the Father Which is in heaven.'" A man may have everything to help him; he may have the record of the Lord's Life and the Lord's Work and the Lord's Resurrection; he may have all the details of that Life, which presents even to the minds of those, who refuse to believe in Him as the Christ, a most lovely and saintly picture, the highest which the world has ever seen. A man may have all that, and yet he cannot say that Jesus is the Christ. Now, as when He came, only those who "are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God," and can in very deed and truth put forth their hands and say, "I know, I believe that this is the Christ, the Son of the living God." And that is what makes St. Paul use such emphatic language about this subject: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."

Well, then, it may be said to me, "Surely it is hard that this should be a matter of revelation from the Father, that Jesus is the Christ; but that in some way

it should seem to be the case that this revelation is not clear to every one, only to those who will subject themselves to a certain influence." Let us look at it from another side. Let us listen to the Lord's oft-repeated warning, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Only those who have eyes to see and ears to hear really understand. That is true; but if there is one thing that is clear from one end of the Bible to the other, it is that we make our own eyes so that they see, and we make our own ears so that they hear, and therefore we ourselves have some share in the matter; we must put ourselves in such a frame of mind that the Spirit can come and show us that "Jesus is the Lord."

What remains? Why, surely to pray that you may really know that Jesus is the Christ. I am afraid that that is far more than many Christians do. Pray that you may have a living faith when you say, "I believe in Jesus Christ;" not merely that you may believe in Jesus, an historical Person Who lived and died and was buried and rose again, but that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, through Whom the world exists. If "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ except through the Holy Ghost," then it follows that we should never cease to pray for the Holy Ghost to convince us of this great truth. And let me add one practical thing. We do train our-

selves for this high faith, for this insight, by a belief in righteousness. If you are always on the look-out to see what you can that is bad in the world ; if you let yourself drift into talking, into thinking only of what is evil and wicked, then among other terrible results you are *rendering yourself incapable of any belief in righteousness*. And this is what people do when they pass hard judgments on others. We say they do harm to others. And so they do ; but the great injury which they do is, not to those on whom they pass the hard judgments, but to themselves. They are paralyzing their own power of seeing righteousness. There is an awful lesson which the Old Testament teaches us. God sent to the Jews prophet after prophet, God sent righteous ruler after righteous ruler, and messenger after messenger, and by degrees, as they rejected one after another, their power to see became more and more paralyzed, till at last the full light shone on them in Christ, and they saw nothing—*they saw nothing*. So it may be with any one of us here to-night. If there is one thing more certain than another, it is that we may either destroy or educate our power of seeing righteousness. We destroy it by harsh, prejudiced, ignorant, still more by malicious, judgments. On the other hand, we train our eyes to see Christ by forcing ourselves to look for and dwell on what is good in

others. And in the future only those who thus train their eyes to see will be able to recognize Him Who is the embodiment of all goodness when they meet Him. Only they will be able to say with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

SERMON V.

THE ONLY SON OF GOD, OUR LORD.

“To us there is . . . one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him.”—I COR. viii. 6.

WE have considered the Person of our Lord, and our own responsibility as to the recognition of Him as the Christ. Let us pass on to the last words in this clause, “His only Son our Lord.”

These words define for us, first of all (as far as it is possible to define it), the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity. He is the only Son of God; that is to say, the only Son as distinct from men, who are the sons of God by creation, and (in the case of Christians) the sons of God through adoption. There is a unique and particular sense in which He is the only Son of God: He is the Son of God as “God of God.” In this profound mystery of the Nature of God as He is in Himself, which we saw to be too deep for words, we have to go even a step further and to find a deeper mystery still: the Father, Son, and

Holy Ghost, co-eternal as well as co-equal. We are disposed by our natural reason to ask, "If He be the Son, how is it that there was never a time when He was not? Whence can there be any reality in that Sonship which we confess to be co-eternal with the Father?" We say, "The Father is from everlasting, the Son from everlasting," and we repudiate altogether in our Confession of Faith any such notion that there ever could have been a time when the Son was not, and yet this very confession comes in direct conflict with all that we know of the relation of fathers and sons in this world, with all that we know, in our limited and narrow experience here, of the possibilities of such relationships. We can conceive of no man in this world as being a son, whose father was not before him. And thus it is that when we come to dwell on these mysteries as realities and not as mere words, we find ourselves at once in a land where there are no landmarks and no posts to guide us, and no familiar lines of thought along which we can move. We seem at first to be altogether in an unknown region. We are confronted with facts about this Sonship which seem altogether to differentiate and separate it from every other sort of sonship which we have ever known, or which we can ever conceive or dream of. There is, in truth, a deep mystery about the nature of this Divine Sonship, a mystery

beyond our present comprehension. One consideration alone sheds a ray of light upon it. We must discard altogether the notion of time as belonging to the necessity of the Divine relationship. We must dismiss any notion of a 'before' and an 'after' with God, with Whom there is no 'before' or 'after,' but one continuous 'now.' With Him there is one everlasting 'now;' and therefore the Father and the Son can be co-eternal together, because with God there is an everlasting 'now.'

We have to bow, then, before a mystery; we feel that here silence is more reverent than speech, and yet we can see, even in this profound mystery, grounds for deep thankfulness. For the fact that there is in the Godhead, Fatherhood and Sonship, intensifies our own relations to God as a Father. We are His children by creation, we are His children as the work of His hands; but if we were only His children in that sense, the relation would be far less close than that which now actually exists. But the very fact of this Fatherhood and Sonship in the Godhead shows to us the possibilities of a more real sonship for ourselves than were otherwise possible. If there were no "only Son of God," then were we not "sons of God" in the way in which we are now; if there were no "only Son of God, Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was

Incarnate by the Holy Ghost, and was made man," and became, through being made man, One with us ; if there were no Sonship of that sort in the Godhead, then were we not children of the Father in the sense that we are and in the degree that we are. The fact, then, of there being this deep mystery in the Godhead, which baffles our reason and perplexes our mind when we try to carry our notions of time into the world where the everlasting 'now' reigns, is not without its compensation to us. It opens before our eyes the reality of our union with God the Son, and through that union the certainty of a relation to the Father, which otherwise were but a dream. Therefore there is no more precious part of the Creed than this, to those who desire "to know the Father," to those who realize that inestimable privilege which belongs to us as members of Christ, viz. that we can look into God's face and say, "This God is my God and my Father from henceforth for evermore." We make a great claim for ourselves when we say, "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son."

But there is more. We say, "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," and in those words, "our Lord," we recognize the distinct relation of His nature, not only to us, but to the whole world. For the words are as wide as possible ; not only do we say, "His only Son my Lord," or "His only Son the Lord of

all Christians," but we say, on behalf of mankind, "His only Son our Lord," the Lord of all men, because the world was made through Him and for Him. And the world never understood, so to speak, the object of its being made until He, Who "was in the beginning with God," came into the world, and "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," and showed to the world, through His life, the object of its own existence. He was the real King of the world before He came into it. All the Old Testament is full of this one thing. Christ is "the end of the Law." "To Him bear all the prophets witness." We were taught, perhaps, in our childhood about types of Christ in the Old Testament—that this man was a type in this manner, and that man was a type in another. The teaching was true as far as it went, but it was not wide enough. All the Old Testament pointed to Him—everything, not only the Jewish sacrifices, not only this or that in the character of some great Old Testament saint, but all pointed to Him. "The Old Testament, rightly read, is full of Christ." He was the King of the world before He came into the world. He was the Author of every great thought that may be found, not only in the Sacred Books, but in the writings of pagan poets and philosophers. Every triumph of right and goodness in those old days, every struggle of goodness

against overpowering wrong, everything that was "noble, pure, and just, and true, and of good report" in that ancient world, was all the work of Him, its invisible King. We claim it all for Him. When He came in the flesh He gave a meaning to all things that had been in the world before; for He was its real King before He came. Let us never forget that. Let us not think that Christ came only to reign over that generation and the succeeding generations. In a very real and true sense He was Lord from the beginning over all things, and all that was good, and great, and noble, and virtuous, and praiseworthy, and just in this world, was from Him. And if we carry that thought on, it gives us such wide thoughts about the words: "His only Son our Lord." Jesus Christ is still the Lord of the world. The extent of His dominion is often unacknowledged even by Christians. They want to narrow it down to those who consciously accept Him as their Lord and Master. Any such limitation is a proof of unconscious faithlessness. He is Lord of the world, and therefore even those who acknowledge Him not, even those who own not His Kingship, receive from Him, through His Spirit, at this very hour every good thought, every good inspiration which they have. We welcome as, in a sense, fellow-subjects of His and fellow-labourers of His, all, whether they call

themselves Christians or not, who are working in this world for great ends—all who show by their lives that they belong to Him, even though they know it not. There is no narrowness in the confession of our belief in "His only Son our Lord." It is not only that we welcome all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we welcome all as His servants who in any way, however unconsciously, are working for good ends; are working in any way, whether it be called secular or spiritual, for the good of others and for the progress of their fellow-creatures. We know that sometimes they refuse to own His Kingship; we know that sometimes they hold themselves, or try to hold themselves, aloof from Him, and to disown the obligations to Him under which they lie. There may be reasons, too, for this attitude on their part. Christians may have perverted His teaching, or allowed all sorts of fanciful superstitions to be mingled with it, and in that way have cast a shadow of doubt about Himself over their minds. It may even be the case with some man who is doing Christ's work that, not at all through his own fault, the religion of Christ has been presented to him in a way that has contradicted his best instincts—in some hard, bald way that offends his highest sense of natural justice and goodness; and that man, surely, in rejecting such false presentment of Christ's religion,

is only owning Christ to be his Lord in the highest sense. Do not, then, let us think that all those who in words own Him not, really reject Him; let us always claim that those who are working for great ends, but who, through some misapprehension, refuse to acknowledge Him, may be in the truest fashion acknowledging Him as Lord. At any rate, if they are working for His ends, they are His servants, even unconsciously, and it may be, against their will. But for us who have known Him, surely there is one thing that comes home to us above all else, and that is, the intense obligation of our own service. For us there is no excuse. His Will is our absolute law; and, as we confess Him to be our Lord, we must read His words and study His character until we are changed into His likeness. The Life of Christ, it has been said, is written in the lives of the saints. In some faint measure that Life may be still shown forth in us. And if we strive after this, if we really aim at a conscious union with Himself—a union of aims and motives—we shall find what those do find who ever more and more take His Will to be the law of their lives: we shall find His strength our support; we shall find how utterly and entirely true those old words become to us—"Underneath thee are the everlasting Arms." In all those bitter sorrows that now and again meet us in our passage through this world,

if we really try to take His will as our law, if we really try so to identify ourselves with Him, that His words become, as it were, to us a law within our hearts, then His strength will come to be our support, and we shall never realize Him to be so near to us as in the darkest hours of trial.

And one thing more. When we realize that He is our Lord, then it is that we get our real work in life, and find the great motive for doing it. Till that time we are distracted by all sorts of motives. We want to please other people; and no doubt there is a sense in which it is right to please other people; *i.e.* it is right to do what you can to meet their lawful expectations. But we often go beyond that; and when we do, we are harassed and torn asunder by all sorts of feelings. We want to be popular, we want to get on well with others; and we often spoil our best work by doing it for such reasons, we injure the fineness of our sense of right. Ah, dear people, if we only can make up our minds to make the great choice, to choose Christ's Will as our law, His words as the guide of our life, His love as our one prevailing motive, we shall climb into a clearer region. His smile—the smile of the only Begotten of the Father, the smile of Him who is still man with men, as well as God with God—will shine upon us, and we shall find that a sense of His approval is the only sustain-

ing power that can really make us brave and strong in the struggles and trials of life. And then in a new sense, a living and lasting sense, we shall be able to say, "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord."

SERMON VI.

CHRIST'S WORK ON EARTH.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.”—GAL. iv. 4.

WE have been considering Christ's Person. There follows in the Creed a simple record of Christ's work. This divides itself quite naturally into two parts. One tells us of His life on earth, and the other tells us of His life beyond the earth. And, for the sake of convenience, we are obliged to treat them separately, to speak of His life on earth and of His life beyond the earth as distinct, though in one sense they are inseparable. In themselves they are the opposite sides of the same great reality. You cannot really think of Christ as merely conceived, born, suffering, dead, buried; you must, almost by the same act of thought, think of Him as risen, ascended, glorified. So St. Paul sets forth the Lord's humiliation, but passes on at once to speak of His glory. “He emptied Himself of His glory, and took on Him the form of a servant, and humbled Himself unto

death. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow." The two conceptions are the opposite sides, as it were, of one shield.

But, for the sake of clearness, we must take the two separately. Consider first our Lord's life on earth. In considering Christ's humiliation, one caution is necessary. It is utterly impossible, if we think it out, to compare it with any other humiliation that we imagine or see, and that, for this reason;—that beneath Christ's humiliation there was always His glory. "We beheld His glory" is the testimony of one who had seen all. The glory of Christ was just as much there when He was a helpless Babe, and when He was being spit upon, and scourged, and crucified, as it was when He ascended into heaven and sat upon the right hand of the Father. In order to grasp this fully, we must forsake the guidance of the senses and of the unspiritualized imagination. Faith alone sees His glory even on Mount Calvary, for faith is insight. With the eye of faith we "behold Christ's glory," throughout His earthly life just as much as in His life in heaven. We see the Son of God on the cross of shame as much as on the throne of glory.

We pass on to the words of the Creed themselves

about Christ's life—"conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."

What does it all mean? It means to give us, in the simplest possible way, a picture of a human life that was freely, utterly, entirely, offered as a sacrifice from first to last. At every single stage the life was offered—when He was conceived, born, suffered, crucified, dead, buried. "Each word marks a crisis in the sacrifice, and helps us to apprehend its completeness";* each word goes, to some extent, to expand the great idea of a human life freely offered. He was born under the ordinary conditions of human birth, save only as regards the manner of His conception. There was conception, just as there was birth, and that in itself is a point which it is difficult to dwell upon here, but which is nevertheless of the most intense importance.

Then He "suffered;" that is to say, from first to last. We must not think for one instant that Christ's sufferings can be confined to that point in His life which, because, so to speak, it summed up all His other sufferings, we call His Passion. Christ's life, from first to last, can be most fitly described by the one sentence, "He suffered." He suffered even while He grew up as a Child; He suffered through the

* Westcott's "Historic Faith."

prevision of "the baptism wherewith He was to be baptized;" He suffered perpetually, as only natures of deep sensibility can suffer—as coarse natures cannot suffer. All the blindness, all the spiritual paralysis with which He was surrounded, was to Him a source of perpetual and unmitigated suffering—only alleviated by what St. Paul calls "the joy that was set before Him."

Then, again, He "was crucified." We do not realize the full meaning of the words when we think only of the physical pain. "He endured the cross, despising the shame;" and yet it was the uttermost shame which could fall upon a nature endowed with the deepest sensibility—it was to die the death of the outcast. And, beyond this, there was the anguish of feeling—as Christ felt—His oneness with His own people, His yearning desire for Israel, and yet the consciousness at the same time that He was treated as an outcast from His own, and from those who were called the "people of God."

Then, again, He was "dead;" that is to say, He knew the reality of the last issue of sin in its most terrible form. "Dead," and in the prime of life. Brethren, we hardly realize sometimes when we see people die in old age, and when death has come to them as a welcome relief, when death seems to come to them almost as a going to sleep,—we hardly

realize, until circumstances call upon us to see it, what a dreadful wrench it is for young and strong people to die. Of course, very often there is the merciful alleviation of a long illness before death comes; but when death comes, as it comes sometimes, in what seems to be the full-tide of health and strength, through some mistake, or accident, or other secondary means,—when death comes in that way, I think it brings home to us what sometimes we hardly realize—that death is a dreadful thing; that in itself (I am speaking of it now apart from any mitigating circumstances) death in such cases seems to have the mark upon it of being what it really is—the oldest and greatest punishment. We hardly realize that, as a rule, because we are so accustomed to see the old die when they are worn out; and in their death a certain fitness is often obvious to us. It is only when we see the death of the young and strong that we see how vividly there is imprinted on death the idea of punishment; not of individual punishment—God forbid,—but of punishment for the sin of the race. No wonder men shrink from it; it would be impossible for them not to do so. Of course we know that men go quite bravely to meet death, but then they go with all that bracing of the will which can bear anything. Perhaps there is no point in which the real courage of a man comes out

more strongly than in the way in which in the middle of life he will brace himself to face death.

Now, if you grasp this, you will see how much, in our Lord's case, the simple words "dead and buried" mean. At every stage there is suffering, humiliation, beyond words and beyond thought. What the Creed sets before us, in relation to Christ's life on earth, can be best considered thus: First, it sets before us His perfect manhood, and then the sorrows with which it was surrounded. Let us consider the first of these two subjects only to-night.

His manhood, then, was perfect. I do not linger on this point, that Christ was a true Man, because I think that is one of the things that we see most easily—we who read and are at all familiar with the four Gospels. The story told by the Gospels is the story of a Man possessed of a great idea, which idea shows itself in every point of His life—shows itself often in ways that seem to us very wonderful, so wonderful that sometimes we have to sit and think what they mean, but yet ways that sooner or later commend themselves as great and glorious to every one. Every one of us understands that Christ lived a real human life; but what I think we sometimes fail to understand is the perfection of His manhood. We do not know a perfect man, any of us; we only know humanity as broken by various things—broken

by sex, broken by circumstances, broken by the peculiar characteristics of the age in which each life enters the world, broken by differences of race—we do not see a perfect man. Let us consider this in detail.

1. We only know man as broken by sex. In many ways it is an unfortunate thing that when we speak of our Lord we have to use the masculine gender. The whole idea of Christ's humanity is somewhat conditioned by our thinking of Him as a Man and not as a complete human Being, which we have no single word to express—as a complete human Being Who joined all that is good in both sexes. The differences between men and women, however much people may deny them, are manifest. There is a difference of nature and endowment. Each sex has its characteristic excellences, but the full capacities of human nature are not exhausted in any man or in any woman. If the capacities of human nature were to be seen in their complete form, it could only be in One Who united all that is most characteristic and excellent in man and in woman. Now, in certain human lives you get glimpses of great possibilities in this direction. You get in some men a gentleness and a sensitiveness which we think are the particular characteristics of women, and when you find that sensitiveness combined with the justice and firmness that characterize the nature of man,

you feel that your views of what human nature can become greater and wider.

And, in Christ there was this perfect combination of the characteristic excellences of either sex. Everything which we regard as most characteristic of a manly nature—strength, firmness, justice, wisdom—was in all its fullest extent in Him ; everything we regard as most characteristic of the womanly nature—sensitivity, purity, insight—was in Him in its perfection. “In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.” His perfect humanity is not broken by the difference of sex.

And here I feel bound to point out to you the deep mischief which has resulted from forgetfulness of this truth. What does the ‘Mariolatry’ which fills the popular devotional manuals of the Roman Catholic Church, and which seems to be almost the substitute in some places for the worship of Christ, really arise from? Surely from obscuring the truth, that “In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female,” that in Him the characteristic virtues and excellences of both sexes are combined. ‘Mariolatry’ is an effort on the part of human nature to supply what is felt to be defective in the presentation of Christ’s character. The tender and compassionate side of Christ’s nature is first obscured, and then it follows that men must approach Christ through Mary. I do not want

to say hard things, and I am quite sensible of the fact that much that is beautiful and attractive in character has been the result of this devotion to Mary; but the root defect of it is, that it is founded on a fundamental mistake, viz. that the humanity of Christ needs to be completed, as though that perfect humanity had been broken by sex. We find in one aspect of the character of Christ all that they seek in Mary. He is Himself the embodiment and Source of all that was gentle and lovely in her whom He honoured so highly as to choose to be His mother.

And yet, while none could be more tender to the weary and heavy-laden in giving them rest, no teacher could be more stern or use more awful language to describe the doom of those who ignored right and persistently rebelled against God. "Good were it for that man if he had never been born," and "It were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depths of the sea." In Him was combined the sternness of man and the tenderness of woman.

2. Then again, humanity is broken by race. The virtues of Englishmen are of one sort; but they are not, as some Englishmen appear to think, of every sort. The virtues of Frenchmen are of another sort, the virtues of Germans of another sort, and the virtues of Americans of another sort; each race has

its own characteristic excellences and characteristic perfections. It is quite true that one race may be too prejudiced to esteem properly the virtues of other races; but to a man who reads the history of the world, and is not blinded by a notion of the supreme pre-eminence of his own nation, there comes, again and again, evidence of the greatness and excellences of other races besides his own. Humanity, then, is, in its completeness, broken by race. But if you look at Christ, you will discover none of the special characteristics of any one particular race. He was a Jew, but in Him we discern none of the characteristics which mankind has been accustomed to associate with the Jewish race. He belongs to no one people or to no one age.

I might pursue the thought further, but it is enough to indicate its direction. What is the conclusion? Let us dwell on the perfection of Christ's manhood: on the overwhelming fact that He lived a perfect life. We set our lives, broken as they are by so many imperfections, against His, and the sense of the contrast fills us with unaffected humility. And while this is well, yet it is good to remember that in a very real and true sense through re-association we are one with Him, and that, therefore, frail and weak as we are, we may even now take to ourselves the comfort of the words of St. Paul, "Ye are complete in Him."

SERMON VII.

THE PASSION.

“But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—PHIL. ii. 7, 8.

WE pass on to the question, What are the lessons of Christ's sufferings considered in connection with His true human nature? We confess in the Creed our belief in Christ's sufferings in sentences each of which serves to complete the full idea that is presented to us—“Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.” Language could not be simpler, there is no straining after effect, nothing sensational about it; there is a studied reserve from beginning to end.

But though the Creeds of the Church do not draw startling pictures of the awful nature of Christ's sufferings, there is much to consider in them. This wonderful restraint in the language of the Church about Christ's sufferings is meant as a sort of guide

for our thought—is meant to show that these are things for man rather to think over by himself than for him to attempt to describe to other people ; that these are things which are best thought over quietly, in our own rooms, before Christ's cross, and with the story of His sufferings in the Gospel before us. Treated thus they will tell us their own lessons. Take the words which Christ used to describe His own sufferings : " My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ; " " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me ; " and that word that came out of the darkness, " My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " One and all, these utterances tell of a woe that was immeasurable and unutterable, beyond the heart of man to conceive or the tongue of man to express. And for this reason we try to follow the devout guidance, so to speak, of the Creed, and do not attempt to harrow and stir your feelings by lacerating descriptions of the nature of Christ's sufferings ; for we would lead you to think of those sufferings by yourselves, till they have told you all their most necessary lessons.

Then I pass on to consider this question, Why did Christ suffer ? We all of us know the answer : Christ suffered because of sin. If man had never sinned, if man had never fallen, Christ would doubtless still have come to live a holy, blameless life, to

be an Example to mankind, to draw men into fellowship with Himself so that they might live higher lives. But man having sinned, by a necessary consequence suffering and death came into the world. These awful things, suffering and death, are not original inhabitants of this world, they are intruders. It is a great comfort to know this. Any one who looks into himself and at his fellow-creatures, and sees all the evidences of selfishness in himself and others which vex and annoy him, must be comforted immensely by the teaching of the Bible about the Fall. If it were the case that this selfishness which you find within and around you, and that this suffering and death that haunt you, were according to the original idea of man's being, why then there is but one conclusion, that of all possible beings we are the most miserable. But if, on the other hand, evil came into this world from the outside, then there is hope that the horrible results of this evil may one day be expelled from it, and the world may be again as it was at first, "very good." And the great lesson which Christ's sufferings teach us is that once evil was conquered through suffering. Christ, as it were, tasted the whole power of evil. From the first moment of His life, evil tried to turn Him from His Father's Will ; evil it was that presented itself to Him under the blandest and most alluring forms in

the temptation; evil it was that harassed Him all through His life; evil it was that finally rushed on Him and tortured and killed Him; and yet evil in His Person was overcome by suffering, and since then suffering remains the means through which all His brethren learn to conquer evil.

The further question remains, How is it that Christ's life and death affect the Eternal Father? That question we never can answer. Men have tried to answer it in all sorts of ways; they have built up systems out of their efforts, but all these systems have ended sooner or later in contradictions, or sometimes in theories which convey to men the idea of an unjust God. To try to show how Christ's sufferings affect the Mind and Will of God is simply to waste words. We do not know. We are standing, as it were, on the shore of a great ocean, into the depths of which we cannot penetrate. But what makes these words, with their stern and awful reserve, "was crucified, dead, and buried," so intensely precious to us in the Creed, is that they show for ever to man what he can understand, viz. that suffering is the one way through which evil has been overcome in the past, and they give him a real foundation for hope that one day it will be finally expelled from this world of God.

And in this connection, I would observe, it is quite

true to say that Christ suffered beyond all others. I do not mean as regards physical pain, because others may have suffered as much since ; but no one can read Christ's life and think what it was to Him to be, in the words of the Psalmist, " the scorn of men and the outcast of the people," or, in the words of the Evangelical Prophet, " a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; " no one can grasp the meaning of these expressions and fail to see that Christ, in His Soul, in His mental sorrows, suffered beyond all others. Suffering, you know, even with us men, is a varying thing ; the same suffering affects in various degrees different men, because there are enormously differing degrees of sensibility to suffering. There are some men, who, because their nervous systems are more highly developed, suffer tortures from the same sort of pain which, in others, only causes slight inconvenience. Every one who has ever felt what nervous pain is, knows that even of all possible pains that could be imagined, it is far the most terrible. And, just in the same sort of way, there are some people whose natures are so shallow, that they are very little affected by the unkindness of other people. They never feel anything deeply, they forget everything and expect others to forget ; while others feel so deeply, that once wounded they may forgive, but never can cease to feel the sting. So that even

among men, the degrees of bodily and mental suffering are very different; the higher the nature, the greater the capacity for suffering both in body and in mind.

“The mark of rank in nature
Is capacity for pain.”

People have to pay, as it were, for having a refined and sensitive nature, by a greater capacity for suffering. Now, Christ's Nature was the purest, the most sensitive of all: “He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,” was the witness of the prophet concerning Him. There was in Him sensibility far greater than in the most delicately nurtured woman amongst us. And, therefore, Christ suffered beyond all others, because He was more capable of mental suffering. He suffered, also, not only in His death, but all through His life; His whole life from beginning to end was a sacrifice, and the Passion was only the culmination of a long series of acts of sacrifice freely offered, day after day, and year after year, from Nazareth on to Calvary. Now, the hardest of all lessons is the one which comes out of this, the hardest for a man to learn himself, and the hardest to put rightly to other people. It is that suffering, rightly taken, gives to men far greater power than aught else. What you are doing through your brain or through any other power which God may have given you,

may be much, but what you may do by "taking up the cross" is far more. Christ conquered sin and death through suffering; Christ conquered sin and death by descending into the depths of association with sin, and enduring the suffering which sin brings in its train. He conquered by sharing, to the fullest extent, the shame and agony which any of His brethren could ever be called upon to bear. If we are to share that power which He had, it will be by suffering with Him. We hear of power of different kinds, the power, *e.g.* of eloquence; but, great as the power of the tongue is, unless there is something behind the tongue, it will not overcome evil. Not until you have schooled yourself to enter into your passion when it comes to you, and to bear it as a brave man, or as a brave woman, will you have real power over evil. And that power you will gain, not merely by a hard, strong sort of endurance, but through laying hold, as it were, of Christ by the hand, and through consciousness of Christ's Presence.

For it will be your oneness in spirit with Him which alone will give you this power. You cannot gain it in a day or a week; you may wish ever so much to bear some great suffering; but unless, before it comes, you have braced yourself to bear little disappointments and slights, schooled yourself to bear little discomforts without murmuring, schooled your-

self to do and to endure for the sake of others, to give daily, "hoping for nothing in return;" unless that is the case, then, when the hour of your passion comes to you, it will bring you no power over evil; it will only crush you in mind and body, and leave you broken and useless.

" But all through life I see a Cross,
Where sons of God yield up their breath ;
There is no gain except by loss,
There is no life except by death ;
There is no vision but by Faith,
No glory but by bearing shame,
No justice but by taking blame;
And that eternal Passion saith,
' Be emptied of glory and right and name.' "

One thought in conclusion. The earthly work of Christ is something of which we do not see the close. It is a great comfort to us to remember this, amid all the uncertainty which any little coming to an end brings to us—the coming to an end, for instance, of worship in this Church next Sunday,* and the uncertainty whether we may live to see the Church that is to replace this one, brings the same great truth before us, viz. that the destiny of man is not fulfilled here, that we do not see the end of His life here.

This makes it possible to respect man's destiny as something which lies beyond this earth. The

* Preached July 22, 1888. The demolition of the Church commenced after the next Sunday.

great reason that wars against self-respect and against respect for man's destiny, is the habit we all have of judging things by their present state of incompleteness. We take the tottering, staggering goodness which we see around us, and we forget that that is only a sort of 'groaning and travailing' after that which shall be. The destinies of men are not fulfilled here. "We see not yet," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "all things," but we "see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." In that Vision, we can bear our own burdens conscious that every sorrow that we have to endure, makes us stronger to overcome evil, and prepares us for what we shall be ; in that Vision, too, we can see the sure ground of all our hopes for our brother men.

SERMON VIII.

THE DESCENT INTO HADES.

“Christ . . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”
—I PET. iii. 18, 19.

THE Creed goes on to speak of our Lord's entrance into the world of spirits. “He descended into hell;” that is to say, He was not merely crucified and dead, but His Spirit went away from His Body and went into the other world—into that mysterious region which lies beyond time and sense. He went out of this existence which we know and can talk about, and He experienced that existence beyond, of which we do not know, and can only speak with bated breath.

I. When we say our Lord “descended into hell,” do not let us suppose for an instant that we are using the word hell in the same sort of way as when we speak of a place of punishment; the right translation is—“He descended into Hades.” There is no ques-

tion at all about what the original means. Our Lord went to the place of departed spirits, and not in any sense to a place of punishment. The word "hell" is used, too, in no new sense, but in the usual sense it had at that time. In nearly all the places in the Old Testament where it is used, it means either death or the place of departed spirits, no more and no less : so that, when these words were placed in the Creed, they conveyed a very clear and distinct meaning to the men who placed them there, though they do not now always convey that idea. So widely misunderstood are they now, that in any retranslation of the Creed it would be desirable to alter "hell" into "Hades."

This clause does not appear in the early version of the Creed ; it was added in order to bring out accurately and exactly the correspondence of Christ's life and death to our own life and death. The words represent a clear conviction on the part of the men who added them, that without them the account of Christ's sacrifice could not be complete. If the Creed had stopped at the statement that Christ died and was buried, it might, and would, assuredly have been argued that He had only swooned, and recovered Himself within three days. The suggestion, indeed, has been made that He did not really die, as you and I shall die when our souls go away from

our bodies. Such a suggestion, if accepted, would be fatal to our faith in Christ, and therefore you have in these words a clear account of what became of His Soul—that it went away from His Body into the spirit-world. Christ died as every other son of Adam has died, or will die. His death was a real death; it was a parting asunder of the Soul and Body—His Body was buried, and His Soul went into Hades.

Then there is more than that in this descent into Hades. St. Peter, in the text, gives doubtless the account which Christ Himself gave, after He rose from the dead, of what we call His death and descent into Hades. He says Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;” that is to say, that His last words, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit,” were the signal for the quickening of His Spirit. He emphasizes this that we may not think, as we are apt to think, and as nature, by the phenomena of death, almost serves to force us to think, that the soul dies with the body; or, at least, goes to sleep. Christ was “quickened by the Spirit, by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison;” that is to say (as St. Peter himself explains), the people who were disobedient in the time of the flood. The importance of the statement lies in this—that it tells us how Christ continued His ministry in

the world beyond—"He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." He Who came down from heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost," did not count His work over when He had finished it for the generation that then lived, or when He had laid the foundation of it for other generations thereafter; but He went also to those who had been so unhappy as to be born and to have died before He came. He went and continued His ministry among the spirits in prison. The Cross was set up, so to speak, in Hades. The promise to the penitent thief was not a promise to one; it was a promise to all who had gone before Christ and desired to know Him, who had died in His faith, in His love, but without the sight of Him;—it was a promise to all of them, that on that day He would bring rest and satisfaction to them. So that you can think of Christ going there among all the dead, from Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, down to Isaiah and Micah, and John the Baptist—to all those who had been hungering for Him, expecting and longing for Him, to the souls of the great heathen, longing for they knew not what, but surely finding at last their satisfaction in Him. What a wondrous vision there opens up before us when the descent into Hades becomes real to us! How it manifests the perfect justice of God by proving that no man ever has been, or will be, punished for want of oppor-

tunity in this world! How it prevents any sense of gloom, any sense of oppressiveness, or any idea of a necessary want of vitality lingering in our thought about that world beyond! How it makes us realize that Hades still is a place of deliverance—a place, too, where, on a representative occasion, and doubtless again and again since, the gospel was preached to those who had not heard it before, and who, because they had not so heard it, and therefore had had no chance of accepting it, are spoken of as “the spirits in prison!” So you gain those two thoughts from these words. They show the completeness of Christ’s sacrifice, in that He died as you and I shall die—that He died by the separation of body and soul, and that each of these went to its distinct place. And you gain the further thought of the continuance of His ministry in the world beyond, of the Light shining in the dark places there.

When this Article of the Creed, read together with the rest of the Creed, first dawned on Christendom, it was an occasion of great joy. For it gave men a sense that when that terrible hour of death should come to them, when their time should come to pass “through the valley of the shadow of death,” they need “fear no evil,” because Christ would be with them—that He had, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “tasted death for every man.”

It also gave the sense that in that world beyond they would find Christ at work, and that among those whom they had known and whom they had perhaps despaired of here, Christ would still continue His ministry and complete His work. These convictions were the greatest comfort to those of old. Alas! to a great extent we have lost sight of all this side of things. I wonder whether there are six people in this Church to-night who could look into themselves and say that this Article, "He descended into hell," had been a comfort to them! I hope there are; but I fear there are not. Now, why have we lost that sense of joy? Why has that world beyond become such a gloomy place to us? Why is it only a place that we have hazy and doubtful thoughts about? I think we can see. In an evil day for the Church, men were not contented with the sublime reserve of the Creed and of what followed legitimately from the Creed; they were not contented to know that Christ had died as other men died, and that Christ had gone into the world beyond to continue His Ministry there, and to preach to those who knew Him not here. They wanted to go further, and to formulate a precise account of what happened there. They 'knew too much,' and so they proceeded to build up an elaborate system of purgatory, by which they attempted to describe, not what has been be-

fore us, viz. Christ's continued love and mercy towards those who had not known Him here, but the actual state of departed souls and the means by which they were purified. They represented the state of departed souls as one of very great agony, and they often used a description of those agonies as a means to work on the feelings of their surviving friends and relations.

Dismal were, and are, the pictures drawn of that which happens to the departed souls, and such pictures touched people's tenderest feelings. You who have your treasure in Paradise know that nothing would move you so much as anything which could tell you about those who have gone, and could lift the veil that hides their present life. This the doctrine of purgatory professed to do in great detail. Then came the great reaction at the Reformation, which carried away with the false much that was precious and true. In the natural reaction against this false picture of purgatory, which represented the present state of the departed much as it is set forth in the language of a modern poet—*

“ In pains beyond all earthly pains,
Favourites of Jesus there they lie”—

a great deal was lost sight of. Men revolted against such a fiction; they felt that such descriptions were a

* F. W. Faber.

contradiction of the Spirit's words, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And they were right in their protest. But the result of that revolt from over-definition has been to almost blot out of the minds of the great majority of English Churchmen any sense of comfort arising from these words, "He descended into hell;" any notion of Christ's ministry continuing among those who could not see Him or understand Him here.

And so we miss the real comfort of this Article of the Creed, viz. that there is an intermediate state, and that there is a capacity for growth and development in that state. Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison who were," St. Peter says, "sometime disobedient." One thing is certain about Hades since Christ's descent into it, viz. that it is a place, where those who have been stunted here, may find their full growth; that it is a place of education; that it is—most blessed truth of all—a place where Christ went once on a representative occasion, and that Christ having been there once, has been there since, for He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

It is impossible for us to think that He would limit His ministry there to that one time at which we say in the Creed that "He descended into hell." But as to the details of His work there, as to His

methods, we must be content to say we do not know. Directly we get beyond a general statement, directly we formulate speculations about sin being cleansed away in this way or that way, we are in danger ; but as long as we remain true to the simple exposition of St. Peter's language, we are on safe ground. In the early Church the present growth of the faithful dead was recognized. In every Communion service in the early Church there was the most solemn recognition made, and prayers were offered for the faithful departed, as well as prayers for all the living. That such prayers should be restored to our public service is indeed much to be wished. It would go far to restore to us a sense of our real relation to the departed, it would deepen our sense of the communion of saints. And though we may be able to do little to influence the rulers of our Church in a matter like this, yet every one of us can, whenever we kneel down to say our prayers for the living, refuse to be guilty of what seems like the heartlessness of leaving out the dead. Let us never again leave out the name of any for whom we have been praying, merely because they have died. No doubt such prayers will be different in form ; *e.g.* while others are living we should pray, among other things for them, that they may be delivered from the temptations of this ungodly world, and when they go beyond the

veil such prayers lose their meaning ; but do not let us leave them out of our prayers altogether merely because they have died, and because we do not know precisely how those prayers may be answered. We leave all that in the hands of a good God ; but at least we can pray that He Who "descended into hell," into the place of departed spirits, that He might declare the good tidings to those who were then there, may grant eternal rest to those whom "we have loved and lost awhile," and may let His own light shine on them.

SERMON IX.

THE RESURRECTION.

“Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him.”—ROM. vi. 9.

DEATH, then, is, as we have seen, the separation of the soul and the mortal body. That is a thought we ought often to dwell upon, because the outward appearances of death are so misleading. When you read an awful story like that which meets us in the newspapers this week*—a story of murder and then of the mutilation of the dead—it revolts, of course, all your better feelings ; but if you have quite realized that death is a parting of soul and body, you are delivered from thinking as men sometimes do, in a half-unconscious sort of way, that mutilation hurts the dead. Nothing which happens after death to the body can make any real difference. The soul has gone away, and the soul, which is the real self, cannot be injured then by what men can do to the body.

* The allusion is to one of the terrible Whitechapel murders.

Now, as death is a parting, so resurrection, on the other hand, is a reunion of body and soul. It was so with Christ; His soul came back into His body on the third day. "The third day He rose again from the dead, according to the Scriptures;" that is to say, as the Scriptures testify. The life which, by His own Will He had laid down, He took again, only He took it free from the conditions and limitations under which He had lived it before; and yet He was recognized as He Who had died, even amid the perfections of His glorified manhood.

The Resurrection of our Lord helps us to see the answer to two great questions.

1. Is there life beyond the grave?

We Christians who believe in Christ, believe that He answered that hard question. The special preciousness of the Resurrection to us is that in this world, where we see people die every day, there was One Who passed through death, Who was once standing in this world on the other side of the grave from us, and that He Who thus reversed all known natural laws told us distinctly that He rose again, that we might be able to rise with Him. This is the substance of St. Paul's language about Christ's Resurrection: "If Christ be not risen, then is our faith vain; . . . we are of all men most miserable." His Resurrection warrants the certainty of our own. Men

saw Him on the other side of the grave in this world ; they were not left to believe that He rose in another world ; they saw Him here in this scene of which ordinarily death is the final stage. For once they looked beyond that final stage, and were filled with a great hope.

2. And then there is the other question. What is that life beyond the grave like ?

Christ's risen life answers that question. We think of the life beyond the grave as though it had not much to do with our present life ; Christ's Resurrection tells us that life beyond the grave is the same, and yet not the same as this life. Note, first, one or two differences. Christ's life beyond the grave is free from the limitations of time and space. It is very difficult for us to grasp the far-reachingness of this change. You and I and all men are conditioned by time ; that is to say, we shall be older to-morrow than we are to-day. We are obliged to do things at certain moments, or we do not do them at all, because we live under the law of time. So Christ grew older in His earthly life. When He was not thirty years old the sorrows and trials of His life seem to have aged Him prematurely. The Jews looked at Him and said, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" But "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more

dominion over Him." The law of time by which we gradually grow older every day, passes away on the other side of the grave. That condition of time, without which we cannot imagine things here, came to an end with Him.

And so with space. We must now live and act and do certain things in certain places ; we cannot help it, we are conditioned by the law of space, as we express it. But if we look at Christ after the Resurrection we see that He came among the apostles, but not through the door as heretofore and as other men come. "The doors were shut" when Jesus appeared ; He was not subject to the law of space any more. And when He was with the two on the road to Emmaus He appeared suddenly to them, and "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him ; and He vanished out of their sight." He was there, yet He vanished. Christ's life, then, after the Resurrection, shows us these two important differences between the life that now is, and that which is to come ; viz. that life on the other side the grave is not conditioned by those laws to which we are subject at present, that in the life beyond the grave there is no growing older and no being tied down to a particular place in order to do the things which belong to that life. In this way "we shall be changed," but in other things we shall remain unchanged.

In the deepest things about us, in loving those whom we love here, or in the power of sympathy and the power of enthusiasm we shall be the same. We know this from Christ's Resurrection-life; it shows to us Himself, as the Apostles had known Him before; the same in look and voice, the same in entire sympathy and tender dealing with individuals, with St. Peter and with St. Mary Magdalene. Life on the other side the grave is no unreal, shadowy ghost-life; it is life in which the tones of His voice were as tender and sympathetic as they were before; Mary Magdalene knew Him not by His appearance, yet she knew Him by His voice.

The question may have occurred to some of you—How was it that Mary Magdalene and the disciples after the resurrection did not recognize Christ as quickly as before? There is really a very simple explanation for this; they were absorbed in what they were doing, or in grief at his supposed overthrow. It is not possible to see the Divine where you are absorbed in the earthly; it is not possible to see the next world when you are absorbed in this. The disciples were absorbed with fishing, and Mary Magdalene was absorbed with grief for her lost Lord, and for these reasons they did not recognize the Lord. When they left other things and really looked at Him they knew Him directly.

Such considerations are of great importance, they give to the idea of life beyond the grave a definiteness which makes it something deeper and more inspiring than we could ever have thought it to be. Our Lord's Life after the Resurrection becomes an inspiration to us. It delivers us from the terrible apprehension that death is going to change everything; it assures us that not only we ourselves, but others whom we have known and cared about, will be the same in the other world in all that constitutes the fulness of our human nature apart from its infirmities and limitations; it assures us that such words as "home" and "love" will only be realized in the fulness of all that they mean, in that world beyond the grave. We are certain of this, because all that belonged to our Lord's life and to the fulness of His nature, all His tender sympathies, all the power of showing that sympathy by look and voice, remained to Him after the Resurrection.

One thing in conclusion. If the life that is to come flows out of the life that now is, it gives a complete answer to the contentions of secularism. I have always felt what a strong position secularism occupies against that feeble Christianity which cuts men's lives right into two, and says, "Your life now belongs to this world, and has nothing to do with the life hereafter." Unless the life hereafter flows out of this

life, unless the things that are worth doing and learning now are to come into this after-life, there is much force in the secularist contention that you had better think of the present life and leave the future one to take care of itself ; that you should make the best of this world, because the life of the world beyond is much too speculative and visionary to be worth living for. But if it be the truth that everything, which we do now that is worth doing, links itself on to the life to come, that everything you learn now, music, languages, science—everything that is worth the learning—is the seed of far greater knowledge in the life to come ; if you see in the life to come, not something disconnected from this life, but connected as the intellectual and social continuation and development of this ;—then, I say, you have got a clear answer to the man who comes and tells you that all you should care for is to make the best of this world. You can take his formula, and you can say, “ Yes, I do make the best of this world ; the only difference between me and you would be this, that we should differ as to what is the best. If you mean by it seeking the best things, trying to find out the things that are best worth knowing and doing, the things that are best worth doing and cultivating, the highest virtues, and even sacrificing one’s life to attain to them—if you mean that by making the best of this

world, I am with you entirely. But if you only mean making as much money as one can, and heaping together as many good things as one can, then I think your view of this life is a mean and a poor one." The Christian view of a larger life flowing out of this gives the greatest motive even for doing the commonest things in the world as well as possible, for it links this life on to the world to come in a way that makes the life to come a perpetual, a daily inspiration.

The fact is, that Christ's Resurrection has taught us even more than the Incarnation has, that heaven is to be found on earth in a very true sense. The Resurrection has linked the two worlds together. If you continually try to see the deepest things in the world around you, if you continually try to learn what is worth learning, and to care for what is worth caring for ; if you try in that way to get at the heart of things around you, you will find here and now, just as when Christ Himself walked on the earth, that the Kingdom of God is within you, in your very midst.

SERMON X.

THE ASCENSION.

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more ; but ye see Me : . . . He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me : and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”—ST. JOHN xiv. 19, 21.

“HE ascended into heaven,” we say in the Creed. Did Christ, then, go away from this world, and, as it were, turn His back upon it? Surely not ; the true idea of the Ascension is, not “a change of position” into the dim distance, but “a change into another mode of existence,” a passing to God Who is not “here” or “there.”* The ascended Christ is still the same Man, Who rose again from the dead and showed Himself in this world to the Apostles, to St. Peter, St. John, and to the others, and He is still on this earth, but not in such a fashion that we can ever see Him. During the forty days the disciples saw Him only at intervals, and were thus trained for the time when they should “see Him no more ;” that is to say, should not see Him with their bodily eyes.

* Westcott’s “Historic Faith,” p. 80.

But they had been taught by Him before that the earth was to be henceforth the scene of His veiled glory, that there would still be a sense in which *they* might see Him, "though the world saw Him not;" that they who loved Him to the end of time would not have to climb up to heaven to bring Christ down, but should still find Him on the earth manifesting Himself to them. And then they had to come gradually to a further truth about the Ascension, viz. that they could not find Christ always and everywhere on this earth, until He had seemed to leave it. During the forty days they could still find Him here, but only at uncertain intervals. His Presence was limited, so to speak, by a visible coming and going, by a showing Himself to men in one or in another place. But in order that they might be able to find Him always and everywhere, in order that He might manifest Himself perpetually to His own, He must withdraw His visible Presence. Thus it was expedient for the disciples "that He should go away;" that He should appear no more visibly at this or that place or time, so that they might gain a perpetual sense of His unseen Presence. This "joy" which "no man could take from them" is secured for all time by His Ascension. Because He ascended, He is able in a most blessed way to be present with us in the Holy Communion. Day by day, week by week, in

all places throughout Christendom the faithful meet together to acknowledge and rejoice in His presence among them ; they sit with Him at meat ; He is known by them "in the breaking of bread." Nor is His special presence only vouchsafed in the Holy Communion ; Christ is present wherever a good deed is done in His name, even if it be done by those who own Him not ; Christ is present wherever a kind act is done, even in the giving of a cup of cold water in His name. When we see great and noble actions, and admire them and wonder at them, we are admiring and wondering at Christ. He speaks of His "going away and coming again." He does come again wherever men show His spirit and do His works. He comes again in everything that is ever done in the cause of righteousness and truth. So also in every place where there is suffering, nobly endured, there is Christ. Wherever in this world the cross is being bravely borne, wherever there are homes upon which sorrow has passed, even though the sufferers know it not, yet there is the presence of Christ. The Passion of Christ was in one sense endured once for all. *Once* He visibly ascended the cross and stretched out His arms to all men. And yet, in a real and true sense, Christ suffers every day in virtue of His sympathy with those in this world who are one with Him, and who are called upon to hang on their cross

beside Him. Again, there is for those who have "eyes to see," the presence of Christ manifested in all the great crises of history ; Christ comes in all the great events of history ; He comes again and again in every great uprising of men against oppression. It was said of Him, "He shall deliver the poor when he crieth." Those great revolutions of the world by which the liberties of men have been gained were comings of Christ ; *e.g.* the abolition of slavery was a coming of Christ to deliver the oppressed. He comes, then, not only to sanctify individual souls, but to preach deliverance to the captive. Wherever men are striving for larger liberty, or for deeper righteousness, or for a more virtuous and orderly life, there is a coming of Christ. Christ, then, though He has ascended, is only out of sight ; He is still here, and this out-of-sightness of Christ is the source of the greatest blessing to us, and of far deeper blessings than could have come if He had remained on this earth. Through it we reach a higher level of goodness and virtue, than would have been possible if He were manifested here. If Christ had remained at Jerusalem, or in some city in a certain place, then people must have gone to that place to consult Him, and talk with Him, and learn of Him. That leaven of goodness, which is now working everywhere invisibly, would have been drawn by an irresistible attraction

to one place. Instead of His disciples going forth to "teach all nations," the disciples would have been drawn by a kind of law of spiritual gravitation to the feet of Christ Himself.* So that if Christ's religion was to do all that it was meant to do for men, was to become universal, then it was necessary that Christ should go out of sight.

Then, again, the effect of any life upon the character of others can never be fully exercised while that life is present. Even those who have been very much to us in this life, and who are now gone out of sight, did not do all they could for us while they lived. You have known what it is to have a father or a mother or some elder friend whose example has been a great strength and help to you, and who for a time (for it is only for a time, after all) has gone out of sight; you feel that they did very much for you in life; you never can look back to old days without thinking how much you owe to them; you are conscious of a great blank, the world is a poorer place for you, because they have left it. And yet in reality they "being dead yet speak" to you more powerfully than they ever did when they were with you. You look back to your home that has now been broken up, and you ask yourself why at the

* Cf. Liddon's Sermon, "Our Lord's Ascension the Church's Gain," for the development of this thought.

time you were scarcely conscious of its happiness and blessedness, why you took so many things as a matter of course. Why did you not feel the full value and privilege of them at the time? The reason is to be found in that law of our nature by which we never can appreciate at their full value present blessings. There is such a thing as being too near to things to see them properly. When we are at the foot of a mountain we do not see its real size or grandeur, we must go to a considerable distance in order to appreciate them. So, too, as to any scene in nature. We see all Nature's beauties best at a distance, where we can take in all the harmonies and contrasts. So in human history, viewed generally, you cannot get a full sight of great events while you are in the middle of them. And the same law holds good in individual lives. You cannot see all that the lives of others are, or have been to you, you cannot extract either their full truth or their whole influence from them while they are alongside of you; they must "go away" to be appreciated fully, and you will feel their best influence when they are gone. And if this is the case about the influence of other lives, so it was pre-eminently true about our Lord's life. He Himself says that the Holy Spirit would "convince the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye see me no more." The Holy Spirit was to manifest righteous-

ness to the world ; not, as might be supposed, while Christ was in the world, visibly moving about among men, but when "I go to the Father and ye see Me no more." Even that holy and beautiful life must be ended before it could teach men all the lessons about goodness which it was able to teach them.

Once more, this out-of-sightness of Christ makes faith of a deeper kind, viz. the conviction about the unseen, possible, and faith is the highest blessing men can have. "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." There is a blessing that comes from sight, but there is a far greater blessing in the faith that is insight, which sees into the realities that lie behind appearances. Faith changes men utterly. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," or to be of any use to men. But faith in this sense would have been impossible had Christ remained in the world. Often we in our blindness and ignorance are apt to murmur because we find it hard, among the multitude of voices we hear around us, to know what to believe. And all the while through this trial, through this darkness, while we are piecing together, perhaps, a bit here and a bit there of the revelations which God gives us, through being faithful in a few things, does the true, real faith which is insight and which sees the deep things of God become possible. And if it be true, as has been said, that the journey

of life is often like "going through a great tangled forest," it may well be better for a man to walk through the tangled forest if thereby he come to trust and believe in the Master out of sight, than it would be to follow the plainest possible track along the high road, where there were no difficulties and no temptations to overcome. For thus, and thus only, can he gain the power and the capacity to come to that fulness of vision which is at once the full reward and the great blessing of those who strive amid the shadows of this earthly life to serve the Master Who is out of sight.

SERMON XI.

THE SESSION AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER.

“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”—HEB. i. 3.

CHRIST, then, has ascended into heaven, *i.e.* into another mode of existence, yet He is everywhere present with us. We have dwelt on one side of this truth only, but there is another side which the Creed puts very clearly in the next words, “And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” We must not think of Christ as though He had only changed His mode of existence, and were still living under the same conditions as those under which He lived during those thirty years on earth. He has also changed all His immediate surroundings, and whereas when He was on earth “He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” now He reigns as a King, and has all things for His own.

There are really three ideas conveyed in this Article, "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." The first is the idea of rest—"sitteth;" the second is the idea of majesty—"sitteth on the right hand;" and in the whole there is the idea of active intercession—"He sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty," *i.e.* in order to make intercession for us. And if we examine those three ideas—rest, majesty, and active intercession—in connection with our ascended Lord, we shall see another side of the truth about the Ascension.

I. First of all, Christ "sitteth." We must not, of course, take this language about the Divine Session literally; we must not think of Christ sitting down, or that God has hands or feet, or even that there is a place for Christ to sit in in heaven. These are only the words by which we are able to convey great ideas. The great idea that is conveyed under the word "sitteth," is, not that Christ sits as we sit now, but that Christ is at rest. We are certain that we must not take these words as expressing anything literal, because St. Stephen saw "the Son of man *standing* at the right hand of God." It is possible to make a difficulty about the Christian religion out of these various descriptions. The Creed says, "Christ sitteth," and St. Stephen saw Him "standing," and again, St. John saw "the Lamb as it had been slain

from the foundation of the world ;" that is to say, lying like a slain lamb. Here, as everywhere, "the letter killeth," for, directly we begin to take these figures literally, we get into a tangle ; "but the Spirit giveth life." These human words, "sitteth" and "standing" and lying "as a lamb that had been slain," express great underlying thoughts by which we mount up into the Divine region. To say that Christ "*sitteth* on the right hand of God," is to say that Christ's work is over as far as what we call trouble (using the word in its largest sense) is concerned. When He was in this world, His work was one which involved daily trouble and daily toil. Now He is at rest. He "sits at the right hand." The trouble of His work is over. In our own daily work we can for the most part make an easy division, and separate it into two portions. There is the portion that has given, and does give, us sorrow, disappointment, trouble, anxiety, and there is the other part that has brought and brings us interest and pleasure. So we can separate in thought the work of Christ. There is the work which is over and done—the pain, and sorrow, and suffering ; and there is the work Christ does still in heaven, in which there is no more trouble or pain or anxiety of any sort.

So then it would be wrong if we were to think that Christ "sits" in the sense that He has left off

working ; for Christ ever works, and even "the Father works." But God works without effort and without pain. Christ, then, does not rest in the sense in which we rest when we go to sleep, but Christ rests as far as the sorrows and pains of the cross, and all that the cross involved, are concerned. His sacrifice lasts for ever, yet the pain and sorrow of that sacrifice is over. In the Holy Communion, Christ's sacrifice, being an ever-present thing, is pleaded now just as He pleads it in heaven ; for the sacrifice is absolutely one. Yet that pleading causes no pain or shedding of blood. As far as pain and suffering are concerned, His work is over ; but as far as His active interest in us is concerned, His work goes on till the end.

2. Then there is the second thought : He "sitteth on the right hand of God ;" that is to say, Christ's sovereignty is real. He is a King. He is not only always with us here in the world, He is also reigning in heaven.

He sitteth at the right hand of the Father to reign. He sits as a King. It is difficult for us, constituted as we are, to keep the two thoughts about Him at once in our mind. On the one hand, Christ is still with us ; He comes to us ; He manifests Himself to His own ; and on the other, He is King and Priest in heaven. We must not dwell on either thought to the exclusion of the other. Christ is

a King, sitting at the right hand of God. He is not only a merciful Saviour, He is a King. "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." However wrong things around us seem to be going here, Christ is even now King ; everything here is gradually becoming subject to Him ; His holy Will is working itself out through all the disorders and confusions that are around us. We wring our hands and lament over all these disorders ; we cannot see how good is to come out of all this chaos, these hopeless confusions. Then we turn to the Creed and say with humble faith that "He sitteth on the right hand of God ;" that He is King, and that through His wonder-working power He is still making "all things to work together for good to them that love Him ;" "that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved." This is our hope in dark days.

3. Then there is the third thought : Christ not only reigns in heaven, but Christ intercedes before the throne of God for us. It is hard to understand this—Christ is God, with God, and yet He intercedes before the throne. We are in the region of mystery where language fails us. We can use figures of speech to suggest the truth, but we must not think that any figure can ever convey the whole reality to us. St. John saw before the throne of God the "Lamb as it had been slain before the foundation of the world ;"

and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the Lord as "ever living to make intercession for us," as if that was the one object of His life ; but neither of those expressions convey to the mind the whole truth, or the whole fact as it really is. Divine things are really too great for us. We see a little bit here and a little bit there, and we have to piece them together and to live on them ever increasingly, so that at last the truth may become our own. Even these three things which have been before us now are not easily harmonized with one another. We believe, first, that Christ rests, that nothing like trouble or pain or sorrow mars His present life ; we believe, in the second place, that He is a King, and is making here on earth, even amid present sin and confusion, His own greater and higher Will to prevail, so that all things are becoming subject to Him. We own Him as our King. "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ." We confess that we belong to Him. Nothing, except our own will, can separate us from Him. "Who shall separate us," says the Apostle, "from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor

things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And we believe, lastly, that He is our great High Priest, who "ever liveth to make intercession." His is an effectual intercession. He loves us now in triumph as He loved us in His earthly life and death. Nay, we may even dare to think that "the joy of gathering the fruits of His toil adds intensity to His love." *

Such thoughts as these about the life of Christ in the spirit-world give us abundant occupation for our quiet moments. They give us an interest in the world beyond; they make worship a reality; they give wings to faith; they keep us humble and reverent, while they make us hopeful; they give us motives for our daily work, and strength to bear our daily trouble, for they tell of One Who is still, unseen among us, sharing our toil, and sympathizing with our anxieties, Who yet, in the calm majesty that befits Him, "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty."

* Westcott's "Historic Faith," p. 83.

SERMON XII.

THE SECOND COMING.

I. ITS APPARENT DELAY.

“Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.”—REV. i. 7.

WE have been considering, my brethren, hitherto, two great subjects about our Lord—first, His work on earth; and secondly, His work in the unseen world. But we do not stop here, we do not yet see the end of His work, we look forward to a great issue in the future. “He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead,” or, as we say in the simpler form of the Apostles’ Creed, “From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

The Incarnation, and the Passion, and the Resurrection, and the Ascension, and the Session at the right hand of the Father, are all complete in themselves from one point of view; and yet, from another, they all point forward to an inevitable issue in the ages to come, the return of Christ to this world. Christ will return to this world. The Son of Mary

will come again in human form, and, when He comes again, He will come to manifest the judgment of God, not only as regards individuals, but also as regards the nations, and as regards the world as a whole. This return of Christ to judge the world comes fitly before us at this Advent season,* and I propose to deal with it at some length and from somewhat different points of view.

No one who reads the New Testament carefully can fail to be struck by the fact that, to the first Christians the expectation of Christ's return was much more present and urgent than it is to us now. The Acts of the Apostles, the Revelation of St. John, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter, are all permeated with this expectation, that, in a very short time, Christ would return again to judge the world. If the Apostles wanted to move greatly those to whom they spoke or wrote, they used this truth of a coming judgment.

In that great miracle that was worked by St. Peter on the day after Pentecost, he used the fact of Christ's return to judgment to enforce the lesson which he was teaching. When St. Paul was at Athens, in the face of a triumphant indifference, he reminded them that God "will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man Whom He hath ordained."

* Preached on Advent Sunday, 1888.

When the Apostles wished to supply a motive for patience in suffering, or to explain and to justify the existence in the world of apparently triumphant evil, they pointed forward to that day, which was certain to come, when Christ would return to vindicate the cause of righteousness, and their exhortation ran thus: "be patient until the coming of the Lord." And this expectation of Christ's immediate return grew so strong, that it was found to need regulation. St. Paul has to deal with it sharply in the case of the Church at Thessalonica. Men there were neglecting their daily duties, while they sat and watched the clouds for Christ's re-appearance. Yet, even while he rebuked them for this and pointed out their mistake, he used words which would tend to confirm them in their expectation.

Since he wrote that Epistle, the world has gone on for eighteen hundred years, and Christ has not come yet in that sense, and we are conscious now of a great change in the general attitude of Christians in relation to this whole question. Of course, in every age there have been those, who have been too careless or too frivolous to think at all or to care about the second Advent, any more than they have thought about or prepared for their own death; but, leaving them out of the question, is it not true to say that the attitude of those now, who think seriously on

this question, differs from the attitude which characterizes the New Testament writers? Here and there a few enthusiasts have brought the thought of Christ's return into prominence, a few spiritual charlatans have staked their credit upon prophecies which have failed of fulfilment, but there is not now any general disposition on the part of Christians to sit down and watch for the second coming of Christ. There is a distinct change of feeling in this matter, on the part of the later Church. Doubtless there are thousands of good Christians now in the world who are looking forward to the great meeting with Christ on the day of their death, and who live lives which are guided and ruled by the sense of responsibility which that expectation creates, but they are not straining their eyes into the darkness, and crying, "How long, O Lord, how long?" and expecting the immediate Advent of the Lord to the world as did those early Christians. Now, this change of attitude may be, and is, a stumbling-block to some. Ought it to be? Are we all wrong about this question? Did Christ mean us to stand still and to look into the clouds, and to neglect our work? Did He mean, that is to say, that the thought of this second coming to judgment was to paralyze the work of the world? Did He mean that the thought of His re-appearance was to terrify men and make them useless? No doubt His

words have been distorted in a fashion which almost suggests this, but the question is, not what people have said in Christ's Name, but what Christ Himself meant us to understand, and He has not left us without guidance as to this matter. The parable about the man with one talent throws some light on His meaning. That man, instead of using his talent for the Master and trading with it, went and dug a hole in the ground and hid it ; he neglected altogether the work that God had given him in the world, and, when challenged, he gave as his reason that he knew that the Lord was a hard man, and that, therefore, he himself became a terrified man, and consequently a useless man. Among other lessons which the condemnation of this man conveys, surely this is one—that Christ did not mean this thought of the second coming to make us afraid of the things of this life, to frighten us so that we should apply ourselves to things here in a half-hearted fashion ; that He did not mean that the thought of His second coming should, as it were, paralyze us, but that He did mean it to make us, in every employment of life, as earnest as those men who had the ten talents and the five talents proved themselves to be. And we note the same thing in His general teaching. On the one hand, He made it clear to the disciples that He would come again, but He seems to have tried to

move their minds away from the thought of the time of His coming, as though it were unhealthy for them to dwell upon it: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." "If the good-man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched." It is as though He had said, "It is useless for you to speculate about the time at which it will be; to do so is to fasten your minds on that which is far above your ken." It is then in consequence of a deepened appreciation of the real meaning of Christ's own utterances on the subject, that the later Church has thought much less of the time of Christ's second coming, and has not encouraged her children to strain their eyes into the dark so that they might see Him coming in the clouds; she has been content to witness generally to the second Advent, and then to warn men that they must, each of them, meet Christ at death. Perhaps it may be useful to consider in detail some of the reasons which have conspired to bring about this change of attitude.

I. Undoubtedly, as the ages go on, men are quite naturally disinclined to look on the second Coming as likely to be immediate. Any prolonged strain of unfulfilled expectation produces an amount of exhaustion that is absolutely fatal to any real work. The limitations of human nature cannot be permanently

ignored. If from generation to generation Christians had let the thought of Christ's return so possess them as to paralyze their energies, all those great works which have marked the history of the Christian Church would never have been begun, much less finished. In our daily experience men prove that they cannot support the strain of perpetual expectation. We see an example of this fact in countries where there are frequent earthquakes. There we might suppose that men would live with fear and trembling, in daily expectation of a cataclysm, but the effect is found to be exactly the contrary. The strain of constant expectation is too much for them, and they get rid of it by forgetfulness. Just so there are thousands of Christians in this present time who do look forward to the meeting with Christ at death, who seriously believe that some day or other Christ will "come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead;" but it would not be true to say that the second coming of Christ occupies their minds as it did the minds of the early Christians; nor, I venture to say, would they do Christ's work as well as they do, if it did.

2. Then, again, there is another reason why this expectation should grow less vivid. God's revelation of Himself is not only through Jesus Christ in the gospel, but God reveals Himself in many different

ways. He has revealed Himself in the present day by that great scientific movement which has made this century remarkable. That movement has been treated as though it were hostile to the Christian religion, mainly because of its vindication of secondary causes. A truer view would be that, apart from the mistakes and inaccuracies and assumptions, drawn from unverified hypotheses, which may have marked its progress, it has been another revelation from God to tell us the truth about this world in which we live, and so, indirectly, to tell us about Himself, Who made that world and upholds it.

The revelation which God has made through scientific discovery in these latter days, has shown us one important thing, which bears on the subject before us, viz. what enormous periods of time, so to speak, God allows to elapse before His purposes are fully worked out.

For instance, it is now certain that there are bodies in the universe, the inhabitants of which (supposing them to be inhabited) are only at this present time becoming conscious even of the existence of this world in which we live. The distance is so enormous between ourselves and the furthest heavenly body that has been discovered, that it would take thousands of years for the fact of the existence of this world to be able to reach it.

Facts such as these enable us to see how far more likely it is that this world has not yet nearly fulfilled the function for which God has destined it, and that the close of this age may yet be far off.

3. A third reason for the diminution of this expectation is, that human life in these days finds itself in more favourable conditions than was the case in old days. It has been lifted up to a higher level; it is a much greater thing in many respects than it was in the days when men felt that this life was a misery, and that they could only strain their eyes into the dark and look out for the time when it would end. I do not forget that there are serious deductions to be made from this statement. There are those, alas! still who look day after day for the end of an existence that is weary and hateful to them; but, taking the lot of mankind as a whole, it is true to say that the world in these days is a more eligible home for human beings than it has ever been, in any age before. No doubt there is much to be done before the world is what it ought to be in this respect; but, allowing for all that, I would ask you to look back even a few hundred years, and to tell me whether this world is not a place in which a man would rather live now than in the days, *e.g.* of the wars of the Roses? Has not Christianity and the permeation of civilization by Christian ideas made

this world a place in which man can work out his real life far better than he could in the Middle Ages? Go further back—to the Norman and Saxon times. Did not the brawler and the ruffian make life intolerable for the meek and gentle? Was it not the case that the man who lived in those days in what is called “the world,” was a man for the most part given to violence? Was it not so that wherever there was a holy man or woman, or a gentle man or woman, they shrank away from this horrible world into the convent and the monastery, and left this world to go on its own way? Or, come down to the last century, and see if life was not subjected to far greater misery, far greater trial, and far greater possibilities of having to endure the triumph of wrong and injustice than is the case at the present time. The fact that now life is more peaceable; the fact even that we are not now at the mercy of the highwayman, the footpad, the cut-throat, and the murderer, tends to make the performance even of dull daily duties more of a happiness, and men look less anxiously for the immediate end of the world, because they do not need vindication from any oppressive State tyranny or personal violence.

Nevertheless, the Divine counsel is for ever being fulfilled. There will be a day when God will judge the world. Whatever improvements there may be in the

external order of things here, however much may be done to make life peaceable, orderly, fair, and just as between man and man; whatever science reveals to us about those great tracts of time over which God spreads His working; however true it may be that human nature cannot endure a long continued strain of expectation, and that it is apparently more in accordance with God's design that man should do his work without expecting the world to come to an end every day;—yet there are forces at work which make the judgment of this world inevitable. The day of God's revelation must come, and the day will come.

The practical question is, How far is the thought of meeting Christ at death present with us? We speak of death—we say that we shall die. What does death mean? It means to leave your home, it means to leave your friends, it means to go into the unknown, it means to pass away from everything to which sense has endeared you, it means to go into what sometimes seems a dim and vague state; but it means one thing far, far greater—it means inevitably to meet Christ. And meeting Christ means being looked at; and being looked at by Christ means this, at any rate—it means that it will be made clear whether there is in you any likeness to Christ Himself, whether there is in you anything that has, so to speak, been formed on the Christ-pattern, or whether

all that is told you in the Gospel of that marvellous life, and of those wonderful words as to which even His enemies testified that "never man spake like this Man," have been simply nothing to you.

Think of this. You must die. I would not say that merely to terrify you, but I would say it to make you earnest, to make you serious, to make you think ; you must die, I must die, and to die means to meet Christ, and to meet Christ means to be looked at as we are. If death should come now, if Christ should look at me as I am, what would He, what could He say to me ?

SERMON XIII.

THE SECOND COMING.

2. ITS ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.

“The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”—ROM. ii. 5.

WE have glanced at some reasons why that expectation of an immediate coming of the Lord, which characterized the early Church, has been modified in its intensity as the ages rolled on. But in dealing with matters so grave let us remember this, that we only speak with stammering lips, and, as it were, from underneath; that we are not on the level of these things, still less above them; and that though we may humbly trust that we are following Christ's own teaching in trying to see the “signs of the times,” yet that we may not on such a question ever venture to pronounce anything like a certain judgment. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man.” All that we may safely do is to note that (gradually, and we

doubt not under the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost) the instinct of the later Church seems to guide individuals to look to a meeting with Christ at death as the point, upon which their attention can be most healthfully and safely fixed.

We pass on to a deeper side of the subject. However long it may be delayed, the day of judgment remains the one certainty, the absolutely necessary event of the future. The day must come when God's great purposes shall be openly showed in the sight of all men, when all these questions that can now be raised about the moral nature of God's government will be clearly answered, when every man shall see how perfectly just God is, when God will justify Himself to his own children.

There are three things in view of this question which it is important to bear in mind :—

1. There must be a goal towards which the visible and the created world tends, and this is a consideration upon which it is most helpful for us to dwell. St. Paul speaks very forcibly about the expectant attitude of this created universe: "The whole creation"—that is to say, the woods, the forests, the mountains, and all created things—"the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

He distinctly lays it down that there is a forward movement in Nature, and that Nature is conscious, so to speak, of the unsatisfactory form of her present existence, and points onwards to a goal which she must reach. Creation, he says further, was "subjected to vanity, not of its own will," *i.e.* not according to the original law of its being, "but by reason of Him Who subjected it in hope, that the creation itself also may be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Creation, in some sense, shares man's present imperfection and cries aloud for a brighter future. There is, too, in Nature a message about God, and an explanation of present mysteries which we cannot discern; the universe has a secret hid within her which she does not declare at the present moment. Nothing is of greater moral importance than a perception of this fact. "The visible becomes the bestial when it does not rest upon the invisible," says Carlyle. In this spirit again and again the poets have apostrophized Nature, and exhorted her to tell forth her real secret; they have felt that this natural world around us, which at times so awes us by the tremendous forces it brings to bear upon us, which now so charms us with its beauty, and now so repels us with its apparent fierceness and cruelty—they have felt that this natural world must have something

more as its goal than the mere perishing in a final conflagration ; they have felt that there must be in Nature a secret, a story which we could read, if only we had eyes to see and ears to hear.

“ I cannot tell you what you say, green leaves,
I cannot tell you what you say ;
But I know that there's a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day.

“ I cannot tell you what you say, rosy rocks,
I cannot tell you what you say ;
But I know that there's a spirit in you,
And a word in you this day.

“ I cannot tell you what you say, flowing streams,
I cannot tell you what you say ;
But I know that in you too a spirit lives,
And a word in you this day.

“ The earth is fruitful and faithful and young,
And her bridal morn shall arise ere long ;
And you shall know what the rocks and streams
And the laughing green woods do say.” *

So the greatest minds have striven to suggest a deep truth ; they have felt that this world which is, so to speak, created to be, not only the scene of man's trial, but in a very true sense the sympathizer with man's toil and man's imperfection, cannot have been created merely for what is visible on the surface of it, that there are deep ends beyond it, and deep purposes to which it points forward, which demand

* C. Kingsley.

a day for the revelation of those purposes of God which are secretly yet really being fulfilled in it and through it.

2. Then, again, the history of mankind calls aloud for some day of revelation which shall explain present difficulties, and furnish, so to speak, the key to its complex and varied movements. The history of mankind has been to the outward eye of ordinary men only perhaps a succession of dislocated changes. One great empire has given place to another; the empires of Syria and Assyria, and Egypt and Rome, have arisen and flourished and perished; their very names have come to be only a memorial. But amid the rise and fall of nations there are signs of a graduated development, which the greatest historians have occupied themselves in tracing. It might well be that a being of narrower faculties than ourselves, looking at any one of our lives, might fail to see that progress and development which we trust really exists in us. If such a being only looked at a few hours or a few days of our individual lives he might very well say that they seemed to have no connecting purpose. He would see us in this church to-night doing one thing, he would see us at home to-morrow doing quite another thing; or he would see us at business doing quite a different thing; and from the want of having a connecting link he would say,

“ These creatures are purposeless ; they do different things at different times, which seem to have nothing to do with one another.” And yet we know that, however much we fail in the full realization of all that it should involve, what we do in church does affect our life in our homes, and our life in business, to-morrow ; yes, and our life in every other relation into which we are brought. But we are only sure of this because we are able to look at life to some extent, at any rate, as a whole.

So in regard to human history, we are now more or less in the position of that imaginary inferior being who would decide that our lives were disconnected fragments. If we had larger faculties, if we were capable of wider generalization, if we were capable of making connections which we now do not perceive, we should see that human history is a progress towards a definite goal. That is a thought which has become much more familiar to us in the present generation. There has been in our time an attempt, at any rate, to create some sort of philosophy of history, to represent the real progress of humanity under the ordinary events of different nations and different civilizations. We have been taught by great thinkers, to read past history in this fashion, and it has enabled us to see more easily and plainly that everything around us is leading up to a climax, and demands some definite

goal, which only the final revelation of God's purpose can fully declare.

3. And once more. A day of judgment, however long it may be deferred, is an absolute necessity for the justification of God to His children. We cannot always fully understand the justice of God's dealings with His children. All through the whole history of the world, long before Christ came, this difficulty was felt by all the greatest and noblest souls. Why is it that "the patient abiding of the meek seems to perish"? Why is it that "the ungodly triumph"? Why is it that the righteous seem again and again to be so feeble and so crushed, even when they deserve to prosper? Why does might prevail against right? The history of the world is the perpetual history of the mute appeals of men to the justice of God. All around is a state of things which seem to be at perpetual issue with our elementary sense of justice. Who is there who cannot turn and point to this or that rotten place in our social system, where the humble toilers are being oppressed "because no man careth for them," where men and women are perhaps working hours and hours for a mere pittance, while others quite close to them, who seem to deserve far less, are living in luxury and comfort, and yet doing nothing to justify their existence in the world? There are these tremendous contrasts in our social

systems which involve perpetual injustice ; they are part of what we call the established order of things, otherwise, perhaps, we should think more of them, and try to remedy them, in a more serious fashion.

And, more widely than this, everywhere, and from every quarter all around us there is rising, as there has arisen perpetually during human history, that cry to a just God to come, and in some way or other justify His own moral government—to “make the crooked straight, and the rough places plain.” The mute appeal of the oppressed, the dumb anguish of those unjustly suspected, the cry of men and women who know not how to plead for themselves, yet whose very sufferings cry for them, enter every hour into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. We have heard to-day, Isaiah’s magnificent prophecy of the day when “the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself,” and when “they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth.” To a great soul like Isaiah, who was filled with a consuming passion for righteousness, the state of society in any period of the history of the world did seem, must seem, to cry out for the judgment of God. And in spite of the long, hard, stumbling progress to a better state of things, which has been the

bright side of the world's history since his day, there is still much left undone, much wrong unremedied. All around us and everywhere, innocence is being condemned ; innocence that knows itself to be innocent, but cannot explain itself ; the innocence of little children who are suffering every day for faults that they never committed ; the innocence of poor half-taught men and women, with their slowness of power of expression ; and the cry of every innocent being, who suffers injustice, goes up into the ear of God. Do not think—it is the most blasphemous thought—that God does not care because such people are perhaps poor, or because the wrong does not seem as if it lasted very long. Every throb of anguish that goes through any unjustly punished or suspected man, woman, or child enters the heart of the Father of Spirits ! Or again, just look at what we see so often—the humility that does not get its fair deserts in the world, and that is too lowly to ask for them. Have you not felt again and again almost passionate in your indignation, because you saw some one in some family, or in some society, who, just because he or she is humble and gentle, is made the slave of others ? Have you not again and again burned with indignation when you have seen generous service accepted with little or no thanks, or even criticized and depreciated ? Have you not felt a sort of cry go from you, that God,

Who alone can judge, and Who alone can set these things right, should declare Himself, and should not allow "the patient abiding of the meek to perish for ever"?

These things happen, and they make the day of judgment an absolute necessity. If there were to be no day of judgment, one could not believe in God. We could not believe in God in any real fashion, unless we were to believe also in a day which would come when God would interfere to see justice done and wrongs righted. God is a moral governor. We are sure of that; but, in order to be sure, we must know this also, that we cannot see the end of His government now; for without that knowledge we can have no certainty about His moral government of the world.

Everything, then, demands the day of judgment. Nature demands it, history demands it, undeserved wrong demands it; nay, the very reputation of God demands it too. Let us pray more earnestly than ever, that whenever that day comes we may be found to be, not of those who have caused the oppressed, and wronged, and slighted to appeal to the judgment of God, but that we may be of those who have in their measure, and according to their opportunities, helped to "prepare the way of the Lord."

SERMON XIV.

THE SECOND COMING.

3. SELF REVELATION.

“There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; and hid, that shall not be known.”—ST. MATT. x. 26.

LET us consider, finally, that great second coming of Christ as it will affect ourselves. The judgment, in its personal aspect, will be self-revelation ; everything about us will be manifested—nothing will remain hid. Judgment is the revelation of men and things as they really are. The day of seeming is over, the day of reality comes at last. The separations that follow this revelation are not the central idea, but they are the necessary and inevitable consequences. The central idea is that Christ will show men and things as they are. There is something very dignified and sublime in judgment conceived of thus. Often its real dignity is obscured by a commonplace and bald way of describing it. We have heard verbal pictures drawn of a great assize, when Christ, like a criminal judge,

would have everybody up before Him, and, after balancing the good and the evil which each has done, send some away to one side and some away to the other. It is an inconceivable picture that lends itself to all kinds of morbid and unhealthy imaginations, but it has been drawn over and over again in flaring colours by preachers and writers of allegories. Men have been described as imploring God to give them one more chance, and God has been pictured as refusing. It would be difficult to exaggerate the mischievous effects of such language; these are some of the stumbling-blocks that have offended the little ones, these are the earthly notions that have robbed men of the knowledge that God is their Father in heaven. No one, however learned or pious, has any possible sanction for transferring any notion of an earthly assize to Christ's judgment. Christ's judgment will be a manifestation, or, as St. Paul calls it, "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Our Lord Himself, in speaking of it, uses over and over again language that conveys the same ideas: "There is nothing hid, that shall not be known." Everything will be clear and open; at last everybody will know themselves as they are, everybody will know other people as they are; and the separations which will come from that will not come from any arbitrary decision of God which men might beg Him to reverse,

but from the fact of men having become what they have made themselves. Those on the "left hand," to use Christ's figure, would find the "right hand" a place intolerable to them; their innermost nature would rebel against it. Nothing could be a greater misery to a person who had deliberately chosen evil, than a place on the "right hand." We can dimly understand this now. Imagine, for instance, putting a perfectly degraded, selfish, mean person into a highly refined society, among people who love self-sacrifice; can you imagine a more entire and perfect hell than it would be to him? There would be no animal pleasure, no sensual enjoyment, no coarse jokes; it would be to him unintelligible dulness. If, then, even here in its embryo state goodness becomes the most intolerable thing to men steeped in wickedness, what will it be when goodness is made perfect? "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Let us, then, once and for ever dismiss the hideous suggestion that because some poor miserable soul clinging to what it knows of goodness, has not been able to come up to a certain requisite standard, God will drive that poor soul away from Himself. God forbid that we should think so blasphemously, God will not then or now "quench the smoking flax." He would be untrue to Himself if He did.

Nowhere does the art of the rhetorician seem at once so mischievous and so contemptible as when it is thus employed in raising false fears, and diverting men's attention from the sober and serious warnings of the New Testament. What makes those warnings so terrible, is that they answer, not to our nervous fears, but to our actual experience. There are those who are visibly advancing to that awful state when evil becomes their good. There are those who seem to have no enthusiasm for anything that is not wicked and bad. We may, perhaps, have known such—we may have known young men who never could appreciate any humour except it were expressed in some story or song only fit for the sewer, and for the amusement of such people as delight in the smell of a moral sewer. What can be the issue of such lives, when their innermost selves are manifested, save such a love of iniquity as makes separation from righteousness a necessity from within, and not a penalty from outside? Surely, anything like intimate and uninterrupted companionship with goodness, would be a most intolerable thing to them. Christ, then, will come again, and "in His light we shall see light." He will show people as they are, He will show things as they are, and each one will, as it were, pronounce and carry out his own sentence. If any have chosen wickedness utterly and entirely, they

will have no wish to go near God and goodness, they will make their own separation, they will turn to the "left hand" themselves. To speak of God as sending people to hell is downright blasphemy, for hell is what the sinner makes for himself; when he sins he makes hell for himself, even now in this world.

Even now we know something of the possibilities of self-inflicted torture from which none can save. Have you ever seen a man in the last stage of *delirium tremens*? If so, you know by an outward sign the inward hell of the drunkard; none can save him from his hideous delusions and awful fears; he has made his own hell. Have you ever seen a man who is incapable of speaking the truth, for once found out, shown up, and dishonoured? If so, you have seen the outward sign of the inward horror of being a liar, of being wholly false. Such is the force of habit, that there comes a point (as far as we can see) beyond which people are incapable of seeing and receiving the goodness, love, and mercy of God; it becomes foolishness to them; and this state of not being able to see and receive God's love is their self-inflicted punishment. After looking at this, how vain it seems to think of God being merciful and letting a man off punishment! How can you let a man off being what he is? The man is what he is, and, after a certain point, he likes to be it, whether he be a drunkard,

a liar, or a blasphemer ; he has no taste for anything else. At times, even in this life, character becomes apparently fixed ; when that is so, then there is the state of hell. To be utterly selfish, utterly cruel, utterly unrestrained in any way, is hell on earth.

Christ's judgment, then, will be self-revelation ; it will show men as they are, it will manifest what they are in themselves. At present all sorts of restraints act on us, all sorts of veils hide us ; our motives, the thoughts which determine our real character, are hidden often from ourselves. We judge of ourselves by what others see in us ; we are deceived and comforted by their good opinion. We may live in an atmosphere of bad desires and wicked thoughts ; but there have been reasons why we should not carry them into action ; we have a name to keep up, or a position to hold in the world, and this has kept us back ; but every day we go on familiarizing ourselves with wickedness within, planning and plotting and desiring to do it, "letting I dare not wait upon I would." And all the while we take credit for a virtue that is only apparently and not really our own. The issue of such a life can only be one. Desire is really here and now the key to character ; not what we do, but what we wish to do, is determining our future ; for when the day of judgment comes, and we are shown as we are, and these restraints are gone,

when Christ lifts up His hand and unseals our inner life, we shall go where our own desires have led us, be it to the "right hand" or to "the left."

Two thoughts in conclusion. "There is nothing hid which shall not be made manifest." We know ourselves but little, it may be, but we know ourselves enough to make this thought a really anxious one. Self-revelation! How should we dare to face the thought, to be shown to ourselves and to others as we are! We were made for greatness inconceivable, for a glory at present unrevealed, for the vision of perfect goodness, for likeness to God Himself. What are we making ourselves? How far are we training ourselves here by dwelling on what is pure, and holy, and honest, and of good report, to see and to move out towards the heavenly things, of which earthly virtue is the type.

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

What keener suffering can we imagine than to be brought face to face with the highest, and not to be able to see it because we have deadened our faculties and ruined our spiritual senses. Let us think of this when we court temptation, or allow ourselves in deadly sin. What are we training ourselves for? What sort of men shall we be when the manifestation comes? There is only one test—our secret wishes.

Desire is the key of character. "O God, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee ; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

And then think of this—When judgment comes it will reveal, not only what you have made yourself in yourself, but also what you have been to other people, the sort of shadow you have cast over the lives of others. It is a terrible thought to face : "What sort of shadow have I been to the lives of others?" You know what man can be to man, what sort of influence one can have on another ; you have experienced the blessing of good influence, you have had reason to bless God for what came to you by others being simply what they are. Ah, how is it with us? Do we ever think what sort of shadow our lives are throwing over the lives of others? It is a humbling thought that when the time comes at which Christ will show us what we are, He will show us too the exact effect that we have had on other people, the stream of consequences that flowed from our example. Just think of the horror of waking up then, to see that through our unconscious example we have been the tempters of those of whom we ought to have been the helpers ; still worse, the betrayers of those of whom we ought to have been the guardians !

SERMON XV.

THE HOLY GHOST.

“When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me.”—ST. JOHN xv. 26.

WE have dealt with the two first divisions of the Apostles' Creed; there remains for us to consider these last articles of the Creed which begin with the confession of our belief in the Holy Ghost. By this confession, “I believe in the Holy Ghost,” and all that follows it, we complete our Creed. We believe in God Who creates, in God Who redeems, and in God Who sanctifies.

“I believe in the Holy Ghost.” All that follows in this part of the Creed depends upon this first clause. We believe in the Holy Ghost; therefore we believe in His action in relation to human society; *i.e.* we “believe in the Holy Catholic Church,” and in “the Communion of Saints”—in a Church visible and invisible. We believe in the Holy Ghost; we believe

consequently in His action on individuals, and therefore it is that we believe in "the forgiveness of sins," and in "the resurrection of the body;" we believe that we can be so cleansed from sin here as to be able to see God hereafter. And lastly, because we believe in the Holy Ghost, we believe in the life beyond time, in the life beyond sense—we believe in eternal life, we believe in life in the Presence of God.

We shall consider these articles of our faith which flow from our belief in the Holy Spirit at a later period. At this point we will dwell on a few of the thoughts that are suggested by our general confession of belief in the Holy Ghost. First of all, let us make it quite clear to ourselves that we mean to confess thereby our belief in a Divine Person. There is a vagueness attaching often to our conception of Spirit which ought to keep us on our guard here. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person just as are the Father and the Son; He is not merely the power or the energy of God—He is, and ever was, in the fulness of the Divine Nature, a Person. Now, this was not always revealed; it is not clearly set forth in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is best looked at as a long history of the way in which God was preparing the world "in divers manners" for the coming of the Lord. You must not read the Old Testament or any part of it as though it were on a

moral and spiritual level with the revelation of the Gospel. Both prophet and psalmist had glimpses of that revelation, but neither prophet nor psalmist attained to it; they were in the twilight even where they expressed in their words any portion of God's final revelation, they did not fully comprehend it as we do. And so this fact of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is not to be found stated explicitly in the Old Testament. There are foreshadowings of it, but the truth itself is not revealed as yet; there are abundant references to the Spirit of God, but those who made those references did not understand the Spirit of God to be a Divine Person in the way that the Creed states Him to be, but rather to be the symbol of the Divine energy, or of the Divine power. Let us take instances of this. First, in the beginning of time, when it is said that the "Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters," he who wrote that had not in any way before his mind what we have before our minds when we speak of believing in the Holy Ghost. He had this in his mind, that in the one God there was a Spirit or Power, and that this Spirit or Power "moved on the face of the waters" in creation. His words are a foreshadowing of truth about the Holy Spirit, but the writer had no idea of the Spirit of God as a Divine Person. Again, it is said that the Lord God 'breathed" into Adam, and he became

“a living soul.” What the Father breathed into Adam was without doubt the personal life of the Holy Spirit ; but that was not in the least understood by the man who wrote the words ; he thought of the Spirit as being only one of the attributes of God. So Moses and Joshua led the people into the Promised Land by the power of the Holy Spirit ; but it was not in the least understood by them that they were obeying the directions of the Third Person of the Trinity ; they thought they were simply leading them under the guidance and power breathed forth by Jehovah. So it was by the Holy Ghost that the prophets spoke to men ; but they did not themselves understand that they wrote and spoke and were moved by the Third Person of the Holy Trinity ; they thought they were under the direction of Jehovah, Whom alone they knew. And yet, whatever of order we can trace in the Old Testament, whatever of guidance, whatever of truth, came from the Spirit of God. And when we come to the New Testament, the revelation of the Holy Spirit, as a Divine Person, is gradual. St. John tells us quite distinctly, that even during Christ’s earthly life “the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” Only, when Jesus was exalted to His throne, did the Holy Spirit come into personal relations with the whole Body and with the

individual soul. The revelation is made gradually. If you were to take up any one of the four Gospels and count up the references to the Holy Ghost as a distinct Person, you would find that such references in the first parts of those Gospels are scanty ; but when you pass on to the discourses of our Lord in the thirteenth to the seventeenth chapters of St. John, which were delivered on the night before His Death, you find in them abundant references to the Holy Spirit. In those discourses our Lord over and over again explains that the Holy Ghost and Himself are distinct Persons. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of Truth ; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." And again, "When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father."

The Lord would build up before their minds the truth that the Holy Ghost was a distinct Divine Person. He wanted to lead the Apostles out of the old belief merely in the power or energy of God, and to lead them into the belief in the Divine Person, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, Who should, so to speak, take up His own work invisibly after He had

ascended into heaven, and should reveal the Son to the end of time. No doubt at every stage of our Lord's life the work of the Holy Spirit is seen. We find Him in the Incarnation, in the Baptism, in the Temptation; but His apparent action was confined to Him, the Son of man, Who represented mankind, until after His Ascension. Then the fiery tongues, the rushing wind—the symbols of the Divine energy and power which illustrate the working of the Holy Ghost—light upon all the Apostles; then begins the record of that personal relation of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, which is so striking a feature in the Acts of the Apostles, that personal direction which was at once their motive power and their inspiration in the difficult work before them. So when Philip was in the chariot, the Holy Spirit bade him come down and baptize the eunuch; so the Holy Spirit spoke to St. Paul and directed his movements. In the New Testament, then, the Holy Ghost is set forth as a distinct Person; He is never confounded with the Son or the Father, He gives directions on most important matters, He is engaged in widening the Apostles' apprehension of truth. The Acts of the Apostles have been called the Gospel of the Holy Ghost, just as the four accounts of our Lord's Life and Work on earth are called the Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the world remains

unchanged to this day. He is still in personal relation with individuals and with the whole Body. The inspiration of individuals is His work ; every good thought that we have, every wish to be better, every desire to do anything that is brave or noble or self-sacrificing, comes to man from the Holy Ghost.

“ Where Thou art not, man hath nought ;
Every holy deed and thought
Comes from Thy Divinity.”

He is the same now as He is shown to be in the Acts of the Apostles ; He is always directing those who listen for His voice ; as He told Philip to baptize the eunuch, so now He directs us at times to particular work. We are actually receiving instruction and direction from Him, not merely in a general way, as when we read the Bible or hear a sermon—but also as individuals, if we faithfully listen for His voice. The Holy Spirit has taken up His dwelling in man ; the prophecy, “ I will dwell in them, and walk in them,” is fulfilled by His personal indwelling.

The question remains, Do you believe in the Holy Ghost ? Do you look for His personal direction ? If there is one thing which is clear from the Acts of the Apostles, it is that those who wait for the Spirit’s guidance do hear His voice. Do you ever kneel down and ask the Holy Ghost to help you to understand God’s Revelation, or to strengthen you for some

difficult duty, or to show you the path of duty? Or is it not often the case that we are in the position of those early believers who confessed that they had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost"? and therefore it is that we are so feeble in counsel, so infirm of purpose.

So, also, His work within the Body, *i.e.* the Church, continues now. We do not see the methods of His action as in the early growth of the Church, we can no longer interpret His methods without danger of mistake, but we are certain that He Who ruled the conduct of its founders still works within the Body, that His guidance is a living reality. We must, as Churchmen, believe in and expect His present guidance. We cannot go to our bookshelves and pull down a book that was written in the third or fourth century by one of the early Fathers, in order to find a solution, an inspired solution, of problems that have arisen in the Church since their day, and of which in those far-off days they never dreamed. We must believe in the present guidance of the Holy Ghost in the Church of the present day as to her difficulties. We must believe that, without in any way changing the "faith once delivered to the saints," He is perpetually finding new ways of applying that faith, of adapting it to the varying changes that mark the history of the world.

We cannot, without incurring the charge of faithlessness, delve into the past for the solution of present difficulties ; the teaching of the Holy Ghost as shown in the Acts is progressive teaching, its tendency is to widen men's minds ; and if our eyes are strained back into antiquity, we may miss this present teaching. Let us be faithful to that teaching, and we shall not be left in darkness ; let us seek His aid in hard times, and we shall not miss His guidance. " He shall lead you into all truth " is the promise. That promise never has been and never will be broken.

SERMON XVI.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

“The Church, which is His Body.”—EPH. i. 22, 23.

“I BELIEVE in the Holy Catholic Church,” we say in the Creed, and the confession follows our expression of belief in the Holy Ghost. We believe that there is a Body visible and invisible in which the Holy Ghost finds the special sphere of His influence, and that this Body is called in the New Testament the Body of Christ. Now, when we find the Church so described, we are apt to imagine that the description is a purely metaphorical one ; that it is a way of saying that there is a kind of analogy between the connection of the limbs of our bodies and the connection of the members of the Church in Christ. But there is something much more than metaphor or analogy, there is reality in the connection. The Church stands to Christ in the same relation as your body does to you. Your body is not yourself, but it is very really and truly part of yourself ; it is the outward means through

which yourself is manifested to other people. So the Church is in that same way the Body of Christ, the outward means through which Christ Himself is manifested to people ; and the union between Christ and the Church is so real that the two together make up one entity. Christ is not wholly Himself without the many members who are joined to Him ; “ as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body : so also is Christ.” The Church is the present and future organ of Christ’s complete self-manifestation, just as our bodies display our self-manifestation ; and through her, Christ displays the beauty and goodness of His own life. So you see that the expression of the Body of Christ is not a metaphor, but it is the expression of a great reality.

Let us, too, avoid the confusion that is often made between Christ’s Body which He took of Mary and His Body which is the Church. Christ’s Body which He took of Mary He wears in heaven. He is manifested there in it, “ as the Lamb as it had been slain,” *i.e.* with the wound-prints upon Him. He wears for ever the robe of our nature, the glorified yet real human form ; the angels see it. But He is manifested on earth in His mystical or spiritual Body, which in some way expresses and manifests Him. He is clothed in a Body here, He is still Incarnate here in

the Church, He still acts and speaks among men. So He said again and again, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you." "The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me"—ye, the disciples ; *i.e.* those who in every age have eyes to see. The Church does not only represent Christ, but she has no personal life apart from Christ, any more than your bodies have life apart from yourself. When the Church stretches out her hands and takes an infant into her fold, it is not as representing Christ, but as being the Body of Christ, as manifesting Christ Himself, that she does it. Christ Himself is really present to do it. So when the Church offers us His Body and Blood, she does not represent an absent Lord, but it is Christ Himself behind the veil that gives us of His Body and Blood. It is His own life that keeps her alive, it is His life that forms the bond between the members of the Church, and therefore to contrast the Church and Christ as independent, as is often done—to say, I believe in Christ and I don't believe in the Church—is absurd. You might as well say that you believe in yourself but not in your body. But how do you know anything about yourself except through your body?

The question arises, How is the union between Christ and the Church effected and kept up? Through the Spirit. The Spirit inhabits the Church and takes

the things of Christ and makes them the property of the Church ; the Holy Spirit creates in the Church an identity of consciousness with Christ ; so the Apostle says, " We have the mind of Christ ; " that is, we share His inmost feelings and intentions.

And this Body is a visible Body ; but not wholly visible, because its Head is not visible, nor are its members in Paradise visible ; but it has a visible side, so to speak. The Church is " a city set on a hill." Men can see her, and know that they see her, and her form is definite enough. We say we believe in her, that is, we discern her true nature ; we have insight to see her as the Body, the self-manifestation of Christ. The visible company of men which is called the Catholic Church is not a mere voluntary society like a sect or a club, but is the home and the embodiment of a Divine principle, which will never forsake it nor allow itself to be altogether cast out or prevailed against by human frailty. That is a general account of the Church as the Body of Christ. Try to make the expression as real a one as you can. Look on the Church as the self-manifestation of Christ. The Church is not an invisible Body known only to God, but a visible Body here ; though the whole of it is not here, yet it is a visible Body which manifests an invisible Head. Now, this does not prevent the members of the Church from manifesting

a very bad spirit which is wholly opposed to the Spirit of Christ ; we cannot make Christ responsible for all that the Church has ever done, because in the visible society the net gathers in of every kind, and evil is mingled with the good, and may for a time overcome, or seem to overcome, the good, as it did undoubtedly when the Church persecuted and burnt men's bodies, as it was said, for the good of their souls.

There is no doubt that, at that time, the rulers were not true to the Spirit of Christ ; but there is in the Church a power of recovery which is never wholly overborne and destroyed ; " the gates of hell shall not prevail against her," because of this indwelling Spirit. And so it is that, in spite of lapses caused by human faithlessness, the Church is the organ by which we apprehend continuously the Presence and the working of Christ Himself. The Divine energy which works within her may be overborne for a time by the strong currents of human passion ; but the Divine energy remains, and in time asserts itself and brings back to her the mind of her controlling and directing Head.

And even when the Church has seemed to fail in representing Christ, as no doubt she has done in history and at particular times, we must always remember two most important considerations.

1. The Church is a Body, and as a Body her action is only true and real when the whole of her members

are working together. Her rulers may go very wrong ; they may by their example do much harm to her cause, but there is always somewhere or other a protest within her ; there is that which saves the whole Body from being untrue to the Divine energy within her. There have been times when men have thought, no doubt, that the whole Body was unutterably and totally given over to the power of evil ; but always there has been found in her the strong recuperative force which has testified to the Divine indwelling, to the presence of a Force that might be forgotten or subordinated, but could not be expelled. There is a Divine energy dwelling within the Church, not irresistible in detail, but always at work, always shaping the lines of the outward action of the Church according to the will of God ; always finding elements that are true within the Body, sound places even amid much that is sick and maimed ; always supporting and strengthening them in the day of trial till the evil is again overborne and cast out—the evil that man's faithlessness and sin has been allowed to work even within the Body.

2. Again, the Church manifests Christ in spite of the failures of individuals in two great ways—in holding up His example and in dispensing His gifts. In this no faithlessness can hinder her work ; there she ever proves herself to be His Body ; His example

lives in her, in the living record of the New Testament, and in the lives of the saints.

Christ's one example is the undying record of the true and certain final victory of love. The Cross is the vision which the Church ever exhibits for the adoration of her children. She shows there One reigning by spiritual and moral power in the midst of every conceivable outward circumstance of insult and degradation. Men can see there the beauty of goodness, the strength of self-sacrificing love, the grandeur of service, the nobility of labour, a real Ideal. So, too, the lives of the saints are a perpetual manifestation of the Divine indwelling of the Body. The saints are a fact ; they have a place in positive history. The high and generous types of character which Christianity has inspired are not only a historic force in the progress of mankind, but they are a distinct evidence of a Divine indwelling within the Body, the force of which nothing can contradict or impair. That men should forget themselves for the good of others ; that men should live lives, in a word, modelled on Christ's, and forego everything that ambition and self-interest would suggest, in order to promote His cause, is in itself an evidence that the Church is His Body, *i.e.* the manifestation of Christ Himself.

And one step further. The Church, as being His Body, is not merely the witness to His example,

but she is the appointed organ of His gifts ; she exercises a spiritual influence which works silently and surely, which leavens the lump, and which reaches far beyond those who seem to us to be His real disciples. Human society is not all it might be ; but what it would be without this organ of the gifts of Christ at work within it, we can only dimly imagine. The gift of the Holy Spirit, the virtue of Christ's Humanity that is distributed in Baptism and continually in Holy Communion—these are not merely forces that make for growth in those who receive them, but they flow through the members of the Body, and they exercise a preservative force on those outside by their influence. So when every appearance tends to sadden us, when the understanding fails, and we cry in our bitterness, "Wherefore hast Thou made all men for nought?" let us remember for our comfort that the Body is among us. Christ is here self-manifested through the calm strength of an outward organization ; self-manifested, in a way in which no subjective fanaticism can ever present Him, in the Body. Men may call this mysticism ; but it is mysticism of a very practical kind ; mysticism which treats, as Milton suggests, "earth as the shadow of heaven ;" mysticism which recognizes that there are more things on earth than the analysis and synthesis of our senses tell us of, but which are not only real,

but are indeed the only real things to those who have "eyes to see and ears to hear."

What does all this, what ought all this to mean to us who are members of the Body? It ought to mean many things, but I will confine myself to two, as most useful to ourselves.

1. We must quicken our belief in the power of the moral and spiritual forces in our midst; we must believe in the power and right of the Body to deal with the social questions of the day; we must believe in the power of its forces; we must believe that no ordering of man's outward circumstances which ignores and leaves out the Church as manifesting Christ can ever settle any question satisfactorily. There are deep social problems involved in the relations of capital and labour, and in the whole relation of the sexes. I mention only these two, because they are the most urgent. Neither of them has as yet got out of its primary stages, and far more intricate and difficult questions will arise in both. We must not listen to the suggestion that either can be settled or even advanced without the aid of the moral and the spiritual forces of the Body. I am contending for a principle, and I do not want to get into details, but to make myself clear as to the principle. These are the kind of questions that are arising: Has a man a right to anything which we call his property to

the extent that he may use his right to render others homeless and to injure the weak? Has he the right to use his capital to ruin others? Is vice to be considered as only an injury to a man's self, or is it to be considered as an injury in relation to the whole community and to his unborn children? Such questions as these ought not to be settled only on strict grounds of expediency, while the Church stands by and looks on. Is not the very business of the Body which manifests Christ to make the cause of the helpless and the weak her own? If we believe in the Holy Catholic Church as the Body of Christ, must we not say that Christ must have much to say to England in the present day on social and political questions? This does not mean always that Churchmen must take a side and join a party, but that we ought to affirm those principles which we have learnt from Christ as being the only ones by which we can ever hope to settle these and such like questions. To shrink from maintaining those principles, which Christ laid down, is to disown His cause and to desert and weaken His Body.

2. There is another outcome of this belief which we must notice—a consequence of quite a different kind. As members of the Body we are bound to rejoice in each other's gifts. In some real sense the gifts of others are ours. We all want each other, and we ought to rejoice in all that others can do well “for the

edifying of the Body." We must never allow ourselves—shame on us if we do!—in the mere criticism that comes of jealousy. "If one member be honoured, all the members are honoured with him." We recognize this in spiritual things. No one is jealous of another on account of the gifts of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;" no one is jealous of those who have these gifts. But natural gifts are put in quite another category. Men are jealous of each other on account of them. Yet are not these also gifts of the Spirit? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." If we believe in the Body, our gifts are for the Body. All envy—that is, sadness at another's good—and jealousy—that is, the desire of that good for one's self—is a sin, whether it take the unspeakably degraded form of being jealous of other people's affections, or the less odious shape of some mortification at another's superior gifts; it rends the Body, it wounds Christ. And is it not unspeakably sad that the work of the Church should be so hindered by personal jealousies? To give way to envy or jealousy is a degrading thing in man or woman; it injures one's self most, but it does more—it gives strength to that dividing force which paralyzes the power of the Church; it rends, and so makes less effective, the Body of Christ.

May God help us all to apply these high principles to the work of our lives, to live as true and real members of His Body, to be alive to all the spiritual forces within it, to be quick to rejoice in the good of others, to recognize their gifts as in some sense our own, and so to do something to help others to rise to the claims of that Divine Influence which works in the Body, and which still, in spite of our unfaithfulness, "worketh, and will work, effectually in us to the glory of God."

SERMON XVII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

“Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”—HEB. xii. 22, 23.

“I BELIEVE,” we say, “in the Communion of Saints ;” that is, we believe that the holy dead are one with us, that the past lives again in the present, and that, not only through the transmitted spiritual energy which we receive directly from their lives, but through the fact that they are still alive, and are still exercising in some wonderful fashion an influence upon us. We mean that the holy dead influence us at the present time, that in some mysterious fashion we act on them, and they re-act upon us ; that they are still, though out of sight, members of the Body. We mean that the unseen part of Christ’s Body is in full communion with, *i.e.* shares fully in the blessings and privileges of the visible part of Christ’s Body. It is

a great confession of faith, and it corrects a very obvious natural tendency to think of the seeming gulf between the dead and ourselves as a real one. We may treasure the memory of the holy dead and try to imitate their good example, and know that we are altogether the better for having known them, and yet we may not think enough about the invisible cord that joins us to them in the unseen world. Not only their memories influence us now, but their lives are still a source of strength to us, for we are one with them. Who shall say what we lose by shutting down, as it were, the curtain between ourselves and those good, and holy, and upright, and loving men and women whom we have known and loved, and who have gone to the other world? We have to struggle against the influence of the surroundings of death against the depressing influence of burial on the imagination. When we think of them, not as buried in the churchyard, but as out of sight, as still being the same persons we once walked with, we are on true lines. The part of them which is buried is nothing; it is the empty casket out of which the jewel has gone. The difficulty of realization is great, but it gives way if we patiently strive to make their present life a real thing. We can thus gain a consciousness of a new oneness with them, which may be quite vivid: we can keep our interest in them and believe that they keep theirs in

us, just so far as we believe in the "Communion of Saints."

So much as regards ourselves personally. But there is more than that; this belief brings to us a great possession; the lives of all the great and holy and noble become ours. Those who belong to a family which has been distinguished in the past, are naturally, and quite rightly, very sensible of the fact. The best result of this consciousness is when it leads them to try to imitate the good examples of their ancestors; otherwise their very names only tend to suggest a contrast between their own useless lives and the noble lives of those from whom they are descended. To belong to a distinguished family is a noble birthright. Now, we who belong to the Christian Church have an inheritance in all that is good and great and self-denying in the world. We believe in the "Communion of Saints;" that is to say, we believe that we are knit together with all great and good men in the Christian Church from the first—with the Apostles, with St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John; that we are one with them, and that we have a most real fellowship with them; that we are come "to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, . . . and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Such thoughts give us a great stimulus, they lift us above the pettinesses of common life. To feel that all the

noblest and greatest of whom you read in history are one with you, and you with them, is an inspiring thing ; it is a thing which it is worth while taking trouble to realize. "You are encompassed with this cloud of witnesses ;" there are all around you, and joined to you in one Body, all the holy, good, and great ; they are watching you with interest, your little life is really a great deal to them. But the realization of this does not come all at once, partly because our faith is dim, and partly because of the indefiniteness of revelation about the other world. That want of definiteness is a great trial to many ; they want answers to all sorts of questions. Where are these saints ? What are they doing now ? Are they at work now ? How much do they know about us now ? Can they tell whether I am wicked or not ? Can what I do or leave undone reach to them in any way ? Such questions cannot be answered fully, and, in the absence of definite answers, many feel a blank about the whole subject. And in despair men try to establish this communication in all sorts of ways. They fly to spiritualism, and become the prey of charlatans and the victims of delusions. Spiritualism destroys any reverent belief in God ; for how is it possible to think reverently about Him, and to adopt the suggestion that people sitting round a table with their hands on it should thereby hear a voice from

the unseen world? A man can have no true belief in God if he thinks by such childish means to wring out from Him the secrets of the unseen world. Whatever there may be in spiritualism which is not imposture could never come by such unworthy means from the Father of Light. Let us, then, not try to know too much. We have certain broad lines on which we can approach those who have gone before; we can say that the dead live; we can see too that they set a tone in the world, when they were in the world, which abides here still, and that they help us now in the most powerful way by praying for us. We can realize our oneness by thinking of them as they are. But there is very much more that we wish to know about them, and cannot; at least a man must have strange ideas about knowledge, if he thinks that to be knowledge to which he can attain on this subject.

Lastly, the Communion of Saints binds us with one another in this world. The welfare of one is the welfare of all, and the welfare of all is the welfare of each one. It was said by a Stoic philosopher before our Lord came, that every one who was a wise man benefited and was benefited by every other wise man in the whole world. The Stoic idea of excellence was, of course, very much confined to wisdom, but it is right to remember that wisdom meant to them more than being clever. A

wise man was not only a clever man, but he was a controlled man, a master of himself, a moral man ; and thus their cardinal doctrine, that every wise man was benefited by every other wise man's life, was an anticipation of the teaching of the gospel. For from the beginning it has been the faith of the Church that every good man in the Church is benefited by the life of every other good man, that the welfare of one is the welfare of all, and the welfare of all is the welfare of each one. No doubt some of us have been brought up in ignorance of this ; we have been nurtured in that hateful doctrine, "every one for himself," or we have hugged to ourselves the delusion that it does not matter what we do, because we can only hurt ourselves. In reality, every wrong thing we do, not only hurts ourselves, but it may hurt everybody who sees it or knows of it, and even beyond that, to a certain extent, it adds to the atmosphere of evil in the world. To do wrong wilfully is to add to the stumbling-blocks of the weak, who can hardly make head against the present stream of evil. We see in our public schools how the stronger spirits make the tone of the school ; and it seems to depend so much on them whether the weak shall succeed or fall. And so it is in the wider sphere of human life ; we live by one another's blessings, and we die by one another's cursings. Nothing bad, which we can do, can stop

with ourselves ; it goes beyond us, not only through our example—it goes still further, by helping to create an atmosphere of evil in which the weak easily perish. And surely this gives to the life of every one of us a serious responsibility. We have to be good, not only for our own sakes, not only to save our souls, but for the sake of other people. The direct ways of doing good and of influencing others in a right direction may be few, but it helps us, over many a dull day and through many a hard struggle, to remember that every brave effort to be our best selves and live our true lives does purify the moral atmosphere around us, and make it more possible for others to rise above their temptations and difficulties. And to act on that conviction is, in a practical way, to declare our belief in the Communion of Saints.

SERMON XVIII.*

THE DIFFICULTY OF FORGIVENESS.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—2 COR. v. 17.

TO-NIGHT we turn to the action of the Holy Spirit on the individual. We have seen before how these Articles of the last division of the Creed all depend on that one, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” Because we believe in the Holy Ghost, therefore we believe in the Divine and superhuman society which is called the “Holy Catholic Church”; because we believe in the Holy Ghost, therefore we believe in that mysterious chain which reaches from this world to the world beyond the grave, whereby we are one with the departed, and the departed are one with us, *i.e.* we believe in the “Communion of Saints;” and because we believe in the Holy Ghost, we are able to believe

* I owe many of the thoughts of this and of the succeeding sermon to the Bishop of Peterborough’s sermon on “The Ethics of Forgiveness,” in “The Gospel and the Age.”

in that which, when we think of it, is the most wonderful thing of all—we believe in the “forgiveness of sins.”

I say the most wonderful thing of all, for as regards all natural ways of looking at things, nothing is more unlikely than the forgiveness of sins, though at the same time nothing is more passionately desired by man. The soul of man has shown from the first—often in the wildest and strangest manner—how eagerly it has longed for forgiveness. By the sacrifice of animals, by human sacrifices, by such awful methods as offering “the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul,” by self-torture,—man has testified, from the very beginning, to the fact that the deepest demand of his nature is forgiveness. There is nothing, perhaps, which, from a merely superficial view, is so simple and easy as forgiveness, and yet when we look closely at what it involves we see that nothing is more difficult—so difficult, indeed, as to be hardly possible. But we believe in a Divine Spirit who can effect that which is naturally impossible. “With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

1. Let us look at the difficulties of forgiveness. Nature knows nothing of the forgiveness of sin. As regards all your natural life, there is no return of opportunity; you miss your chance, and it cannot be recalled; nothing will bring it back. You may

wish ever so much that you had not made that mistake which has marred your life, but when it is once made it has passed beyond you, and no amount of wishing or agonizing will ever undo it. There is no forgiveness of sin in the natural world. You see it most clearly as regards physical matters. You swallow poison accidentally, and you may be ever so sorry, but no amount of sorrow will do you any good ; you will be poisoned just the same, whether you meant to swallow it or not, because there is no forgiveness of sins in the natural world. Or you may injure your body by excesses ; you may be a drunkard, and you injure the steadiness of your hand or the certainty of your vision, and you may be ever so sorry and give up excess entirely, but no amount of sorrow will give back the steadiness of the hand or the sureness of sight, for there is no forgiveness of sin in the physical world. The common consent of man has seized on this fact, and insisted on it in homely fashion :—

“It is an old and soothfast saw,
Half-roasted never will be raw ;
No dough is dried again to meal,
No crook new shapen at the wheel ;
You can’t turn curds to milk again,
Nor now, by wishing, back to then ;
And, having tasted stolen honey,
You can’t buy innocence for money.”

2. Again, there is no forgiveness of sin possible

between man and man which can effect what it wishes to effect. It is possible, of course, for you and me to have the forgiving temper; we are bound to cultivate it by every means in our power. We cannot go down on our knees and ask God to forgive us in God's way without saying, "Forgive as we forgive." If we would ask for forgiveness we must endeavour to cultivate the forgiving spirit towards others. But that is not the real point. The point is, What can that temper effect when you have it? You may wish to forgive ever so much, but how much can your forgiveness effect? Can it make anything as though it had not been? We sometimes say that it can. We say, "This thing you have done shall be as though it had never been;" but can it, is it possible? We may remit the consequences of what has been done, as far as we are concerned; we may even banish from ourselves every bit of irritated feeling; but, at the same time, there are delicate shades of feeling that have been injured, bruised like tender flesh; and, however much we may wish it, we cannot cure the wound. Do you think that those deeply sensitive feelings within you which are, after all, linked with the higher things in your nature, and which have been really and truly injured by another's wrong-doing (just as much as a delicate instrument would be damaged by violence), can flow out towards

that person again as they did before? You may wish it to be so, but it is impossible; and though you put away to the best of your power all sense of wrong, you cannot regain, do what you will, that wholehearted confidence with which aforetime you took that friend's hand and pressed it to your own. That wholehearted confidence is one of the things that nothing in this world will ever bring back, if once it is gone. There are, of course, people too shallow ever to understand this; they hurt people often by foolish suspicion and unjust accusation, and think that the generous forgiveness of others makes it all right; but they can never, never understand that, however entire and thorough the wish to forgive may be on the part of others, the old relation is gone beyond recall. There are certain delicate shades of feeling that will not yield themselves to any wish to forgive. So that while it can never cease to be right to forgive, how little does forgiveness really effect! You do a man a wrong, and you owe him reparation; you feel you ought to be sorry, you ought to make amends. You listen to your conscience; you go and tell the man you are very sorry; you ask his pardon, and he says quite freely, "I forgive you;" and (I am taking the best case) he says that in the best way, not at all grudgingly, as though he were forcing himself to do something disagree-

able. What then? Where are you? Are you any better off than before? Is the penalty of your wrongdoing really removed? Have you really escaped punishment? If you are a good man, you are far more heavily punished than you were before. You cannot forgive yourself, and that is the real torture. You can forgive yourself much less than if the man had grudgingly doled out his forgiveness to you. Then you might have still felt that some kind of balance remained to be redressed between you and him; but because he has met you so nobly and so generously, and because that grasp of the hand is still warm on your fingers, you walk away from his door more miserable, more vexed with yourself than ever; he has forgiven you, but you cannot forgive yourself.

Is forgiveness of sin possible between man and man? Is not the very fulness of the generous man's forgiveness what St. Paul calls "heaping coals of fire upon another's head"? I know it may be said there are persons who have deeply wronged others and who yet are quite happy; if so, that must be because there is nothing in them for the coals of fire to burn. But with all higher natures it must be that they feel their wrong-doing more keenly because others have forgiven them so nobly. "Behind the figure of your forgiving brother there rises up the shadow of natural

law" *—natural law that is so pitiless, so inevitable, so utterly unforgiving ; that says, you may wish ever so much to forgive, but there is no forgiveness of sin ; that which is done cannot be undone. You may have the best will, you may have the best heart, but what can you effect by your forgiveness of others ? Nobody who has ever thought for one minute of the awful picture Christ drew of the man going out from the Father's presence and seizing his brother by the throat—nobody who has ever, as it were, photographed before his mind the picture of himself, saying, "Pay me what thou owest," could refuse to forgive others. That is not the difficulty. The difficulty is how little forgiveness effects, how little the most freely bestowed pardon can soothe the sensitive conscience.

And in exactly the same way society cannot forgive ; society can forgive far less than individuals. Take the case of a man who has been deeply wronged, a man accused of some vileness by some foul conspiracy. Such cases have happened and will happen.

Every one at first condemns the man, but by-and-by the conspiracy is discovered and the man is acquitted. But can society forgive the accuser, even though (to take an imaginary case) the accused does so ? Will not every generous heart cry out in

* "The Ethics of Forgiveness."

righteous indignation for vengeance on the plotters? Suppose you and I had stood by St. Stephen, would any of us have taken up his language, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?" Should we not have thought it base in us to have done so? Should we not have thought, as we saw St. Stephen's face "as the face of an angel," crushed out of all recognition by the cruel stones,—should we not have said—we must get this wrong righted, we must not rest till we have done our little bit to get this cruel deed avenged? And why? Because of that instinctive feeling that as members of society we have no right in any case to remit just penalties. Society dares not forgive sins; if it does, it goes to pieces, it becomes hopelessly corrupt. It is said sometimes, why should society banish so sternly those who are found out, when there may be other people—quite as bad, only not found out—who are still welcomed by it? The answer is, that society knows in one case, and not in the other; and where it knows, it cannot forgive sins; if it does, it signs its own death-warrant. The interests entrusted to society are much too deep to allow it to forgive certain sins against itself; it cannot let offenders off; and even if it did remit its own penalties it could not give back to a man what he has lost—the wasted life, the honour that once was his. There is no forgiveness of sins possible to society.

3. The same difficulty pursues us throughout. "Sin is the transgression of the law," penalty follows transgression. Just look at the man who has committed sin. Let us say, he has cheated his brother man, for that is what we all understand ; he has got the best of him unfairly, and he goes away smiling, very well pleased with himself. Poor deluded being that he is ! What a subject for pity in his blindness ! If he only could see things as they are ! It is the cheated man who, though he has been defrauded, has reason to go away smiling ; for he goes away with a certain claim upon the justice of Him Who rules the world, a claim which God will never fail to honour. Law, as an avenging Nemesis, with an unerring hand tracks the cheat ; the shadow of law dogs him, as it were, with its dagger up to smite him. It is a terrible picture, but it is a most true one. When we defraud another, or wrong another in any way, there rises up behind us the shadow of the broken law—of law which has become the avenger because it has been broken ; of law, which like some stealthy assassin pursues us, as it were, from city to city, across the desert and ocean, awaiting its opportunity. The offender flees and hides himself, as it were, in his reputation or his business ; but go where he will, the same dogging foot-step pursues him. It is written, "Evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him," like a hound track-

ing its prey. Just so sin, which is the transgression of the law, pursues us ; there is no escape for us, any more than there is for the most innocent child who transgresses law by putting his hand into the fire.

4. But you will say—"It may be difficult for man to forgive, but surely God is not really wronged or injured by sin." And in a certain sense you are right ; God remains as He is, whatever wicked things you or I may do. But is it so easy for God to forgive you ? Just think again. If you believe in God, you must believe first of all that God is just ; and if you believe that God is just, you believe that God is the Guardian of your rights just as much as He is of the rights of other men. And suppose a man injures you, and God forgives him, how is He the Guardian of your rights ? Look at it in that way. You may say, "I would give up my rights." But that is not the question ; the question is—Is God really the Guardian of your rights as well as of the other man's ? And if He is, can He treat you as having given them up ? Suppose you are a trustee for two people, and one of the people for whom you are trustee manages to get hold of more money than he ought to have, and so wrongs the other person ; and the other person says, "I forgive him ;" would you feel satisfied ? Would you not say, "I am trustee for both, and I must see right done" ? Now, when you think that it is so easy for God to forgive,

do you remember that He is Guardian of the rights of all? When you think of God as of some smiling, benevolent Being, looking down on us and allowing us to work any amount of mischief to one another, and then freely forgiving us all, are you not dishonouring His justice? Is it not more true to think of God as high above all this world, sitting as the perfectly just Guardian of the rights of all? Is not that the only way we can bear to think of the suffering around us? Must we not rest upon this? Is it not our only consolation amid the injustice and wrong-doing around us, that there is One above Who sees and knows all, and Who will ultimately see right done to every one? Is it not our one comfort that every single sufferer has one Supreme Court of Appeal, and that though human justice is denied him, yet to that Court no mute appeal is ever made in vain? From the blood of Abel to the blood of the last murdered man, all violent deaths cry out to God, just as all undeserved suffering cries out to God. Ah, it moves us when we think of it. We say hard, biting, cruel things, and we are sorry for them afterwards; but we comfort ourselves that the victims have not complained. We think it does not matter. We see perhaps the outward self-control which the man is capable of exercising, and we think he bore it well; but we did not see what God saw, how the heart smarted within him. We did not

see the agony that was beneath the surface. Those sighs only echoed in the ears of the God of Sabaoth ; those throbs only reached the ears of Him Whose universal justice rules the whole world, Who hears every appeal, from the writhing of an ill-treated animal up to the heart-sob of a persecuted man or a misunderstood woman. How is God to forgive ? Can He forgive and be just ? Suppose God forgives the seducer, how is God the Guardian of the rights of his victim ? Suppose God forgives the foul-tongued slanderer, what about the broken hearts of those whom he has slandered ? what about the crushing sense of undeserved reproach which he has caused ? Suppose God forgives the liar, what about the people he has deceived ? How is God the Guardian of their rights, when He forgives the liar ? I leave you with these considerations because they are so often ignored. Is forgiveness possible ? Can God be just and forgive ?

SERMON XIX.

THE POSSIBILITY OF FORGIVENESS.

: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new."—2 COR. v. 17.

TO-NIGHT I pass on to speak of the way in which God has made forgiveness possible. In spite of the natural law we say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins ;" that is to say, we believe that God for Christ's sake will forgive sins ; that "the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins." We believe in a higher law that transcends all known laws ; for by all known laws it is certain that "the soul that sinneth it shall die."

"We believe in the Holy Ghost," in a Presence in this world which transcends and overrides natural law. And thus we are able to believe that God can forgive men, and does by forgiveness reconcile the sinner unto Himself. We believe, too, in the Incarnation, which is, in itself, the overriding of all ordinary laws. We believe that God has entered into our

nature, and in this moral order and condition of things here below, where to sin means to suffer, God has, by the Life and Death and Resurrection of Christ, overborne this natural law with its necessary penalties. "If any man be in Christ" (united, that is to say, to Him Who came to reconcile the world to God) "he is a new creature: old things" (the old law of necessary penalties) "are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This is a great faith, and it is well to be clear about it. The teaching of the New Testament about the forgiveness of sins is very clear. It does not proclaim forgiveness to be a mere letting off of penalties; its unvarying message is, "God forgives you in Christ." To be in Christ is to be united to Christ, to be a member of His Body—the Church. The Church is a society charged, as it were, with supernatural forces—forces that extend beyond the limitations of nature; so that when we are in Christ—members of His Body—we are delivered from the law of sin and death, there are possibilities open to us of which natural justice can know nothing. In this supernatural kingdom God has established means whereby He can still be just, still be the Guardian of each one's rights, and yet still forgive the sinner. For so entirely *one* do the interests of all become in this Divine Society, that it becomes the joy of the injured that the injurer should

be forgiven. So entirely has Christ gathered up all humanity into Himself that no Christian who realizes what it is to be in Christ can have a feeling about his rights as against another. In the full Christian conception, individual rights of all kinds are merged in the welfare of the Body.

God then has entered, so to speak, into natural institutions; God has constructed within this world of nature, as it were, an inside kingdom, charged with supernatural forces, wherein forgiveness is possible. There are analogies to this in the natural world. Any student of the laws of motion, as they were known before electricity was discovered, coming back into the world of this present time, would see things which he would have regarded in his day as utterly impossible. He would see the wonderful rapidity with which messages are telegraphed, and it would come into his mind directly that within this world of natural forces, as he knew it, there had been discovered some other law or means of motion which had overcome those natural impossibilities of direct communication which before existed. 'Just so, in the natural world there is no possibility of forgiveness; but God came into the world—came inside nature as it were by the Incarnation, and constructed this supernatural kingdom, whose foundations were the supernatural Birth and Life and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and whose

structure and maintenance is the work of a supernatural agency—the indwelling energy of the Holy Spirit. Within this kingdom forgiveness is possible. Then the one question arises—How do we enter it? The entrance into this kingdom is effected by an act so simple, so elementary, that it might almost seem to be a merely typical ceremony. Any one who, coming into a church, saw an infant brought to the font and a little water sprinkled upon it and a few words said over it, might say, “This is a pleasing and beautiful little ceremony, and no doubt symbolical of cleansing;” and might thus altogether miss the deep significance of baptism. It is a strange thing, from a merely human point of view, that a thing, which is so great as the entrance into the kingdom, should be effected by so simple an act as baptism really is. If the question be raised why God should have made so much to depend on what seems almost a trivial and easily dispensable ceremony, the answer surely is to be found in a deep consideration of God’s methods in dealing with mankind. God never uses elaborate means, which only the initiated can hope to understand; He takes the ordinary materials of the world which we use every day, and shows their higher uses and meaning; and so He chooses the simplest element of water, and makes it, with certain words, the means of our entrance

into this supernatural kingdom. The New Testament is full of the importance of baptism. Our Lord's most solemn and last commission to His disciples is, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." There is no making disciples without baptism. This is our reason for pressing the importance of it. Christ sent us forth with the distinct commission to baptize men into the Name, *i.e.* into the Nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Again, in Romans vi. there is an elaborate exposition of the symbolism of baptism. Baptism, as administered in those days, was, to use St. Paul's language, a burial with Christ. The person who was to be baptized went down steps into the open water in those countries, and, having been immersed, came up cleansed, and was clothed with a fresh white garment. He was thus buried with Christ in baptism as he went into the water, and, in a figure, rose with Christ as he passed up out of the water. "Know ye not," he cries, "that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death." And again: "As we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Such is St. Paul's view of the position of baptism.

Perhaps the effect of baptism may be best expressed by saying that in and through it the fact of our relationship to Christ and to God's family is brought into actual being, is brought to the birth. We are thus made members of Christ, members of the family of God. We may forget all about this privilege, we may ignore it, we may do our best to deprive ourselves of it; but there the thing remains, and it does not leave us. As, in an earthly family, children, who may bring great sorrow to their parents by their wickedness and ingratitude, remain their children still, because their wrong-doing cannot unmake their relationship; so it is in the family of God. We are "members of the whole family in heaven and on earth;" and that relationship is not of our own making; or else we, by our own wilful sin and carelessness, might have unmade it long ago, and cut ourselves off from God. But God has chosen us in Christ, for the most part even before we could choose Him; and our sin, and even our turning our backs on God again and again, has not and cannot unmake our relationship to Him.

Therefore, even when the baptized Christian sins grievously, when he deliberately sets himself to do something which he knows to be wrong, or lets himself sink lower and lower by degrees, through the neglect of God's means of grace, into a careless

course of life, in which sin becomes habitual, he cannot change his relationship to God. He is still God's child, sinner as he is; he is still in God's family, though he chooses to live like the Prodigal in swineland—in vile and disgraceful habits and associations. Before he chose God, God took him into the supernatural kingdom, and there he remains. When he sins, he doubtless proves himself to be unworthy of that kingdom and of that family; he deserves to be cast out. Perhaps he becomes conscious of this; perhaps conscience wakes up within him with its message. Conscience haunts and frightens him, and says—"You have sinned, and you must pay the penalty." He goes about with a feeling of estrangement from God upon him. What then? Whatever conscience may threaten, there, in revelation, is God's message, telling him that, as a baptized Christian, he may be forgiven. There is one refrain—"Arise, and go to Him who is still your Father." That is the gospel of our baptism. As long as life lasts the baptized man or woman can never get so far away from God as to be unable to turn back and go to the Father. He can always say—"In spite of all I have done, in spite of the way I have even despised my birthright, I am still the Father's child, I am still a member of His family, I am still within that supernatural kingdom, I still belong to God." There is

not a man in this world, however deeply he has sinned, who is baptized, and has therefore entered the Divine kingdom wherein these supernatural laws are in effectual operation, who may not say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee." Very often it is hard to believe this ; it is part of the penalty of sin that it makes us unable to believe in the possibility of repentance and forgiveness for ourselves. Sin is a blinding thing. It darkens our vision of what is possible ; we see these terrible natural laws at work all around us, telling us so plainly that there is no remission of sins. Conscience echoes their teaching, and says, "Look at the mischief you have done ; you cannot undo it. How can you hope for forgiveness?" Revelation alone gives the true answer—"Because you are still the Father's child, and are in the Father's family, you can rise up and leave the swineland of sin into which, like the Prodigal, you have gone ; you can still go, with this word 'Father' on your lips, back to God. You have not to go to God to see if God can be persuaded into forgiving you. You have, through your baptism, the right to forgiveness ; but you cannot claim this right, and live in actual sin. You must turn your back upon bad companions and bad associations, and leave them utterly." That is abso-

lutely certain. The Prodigal found a welcome in the father's home, but he did not try to introduce all the associations of swineland there. So with ourselves. We cannot go back to the Father's home and take with us there our sinful pleasures. We must forsake them ; but directly we do so turn our back upon them and say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee," we assert a claim which the Father never disowns. That is the gospel of our baptism. Let us cleave to it in spite of the threats of inward conscience, and of the warnings of natural law. Let us meet those threats and warnings with the words, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, in the holy Catholic Church ;" *i.e.* in a supernatural kingdom ; "and therefore I believe in the forgiveness of sins." We shudder as we look out on this world in which natural law prevails, and see these grim consequences working themselves out all around us ; see that, wherever the laws of nature work, there is no remission of sins, no letting off of consequences ; that the fire burns the innocent child as well as the guilty man who sets the house on fire. And yet, in spite of what we see, we dare to say, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins ;" in spite of all these natural laws, which preach to us so powerfully that there is no forgiveness of sins, we know that we are still

members of Christ's kingdom, that we are children of God in Christ, and that in that kingdom and family there are stronger forces at work than natural laws. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new."

Only, in conclusion, this one word of warning. You cannot keep this great faith, and go on sinning. It is not possible to keep this faith if you "continue in sin, that grace may abound." You will kill your belief. You must rise up and forsake your sins; you must enter into the full confession of the Prodigal son. You must learn to say truly, what a great bishop* said in the last century when that parable was read to him on his death-bed—"I am that prodigal." Your confessions of sin, your forsaking of sin must be real.

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be,
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee."

But however bitter may be the recollection of what we have been, or have done, remember that we can never go back to the Father in any other way than with the Prodigal son's confession on our lips. We can never go back to see if we can somehow find a Father; we can never go back to see if somehow God may be persuaded to be merciful to us and

* Archbishop Leighton.

forgive us. We must go as the Prodigal did, in the certainty of this, that whatever we have done, or left undone, we can still take one, and only one, word on our lips, and that we shall be false to the great fact of our relationship with Him if we take any other, and that one word is "Father." *

* Cf. Hancock's "Return to the Father."

SERMON XX.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body.”—I COR. xv. 42-44.

PERHAPS no Article in the Creed needs a more careful explanation than the one which we have at last reached : “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” For there is a too common view of what is meant by it which is as unreasonable as it is unscientific. The ordinary notion that the fleshly particles, which compose every body, will be collected again by God and be reunited in their old frame, is demonstrably false, and takes no account of our real physical conditions. For this body is, as regards its material particles, something which changes a little every day of our life. “Every step which we take involves some slight modification of the material particles of our bodies, every breath which we draw involves some infinitesimal change.”* It is impossible, therefore, to reconcile

* Westcott’s “Historic Faith.”

these facts with the common idea of a physical resurrection, viz. that God will re-collect out of the numerous gases and substances into which they have been fused, those materials which at the time of death belonged to the body, so that it may be able to rise again.

In order to get a right view of this mysterious matter, we must, first of all, grasp the highest view of our bodily nature, viz. that it is a means of self-expression. The body was given to us for the purpose of expressing the higher nature. It is the medium through which the higher nature is manifested. All the deep things which have entered into men's minds, would have been lost to the world if they had not been expressed through the medium of the body, that is, through speech or writing; all the great musical sounds which it has ever entered into the heart of man to conceive, could not have found expression except through the hands or the voice. According, then, to the highest view, the body is the means of self-expression. So, in the face of every great and good man, something of himself is expressed. Think for a moment what it must have been for men to have looked upon our Lord's face; think what they must have gathered from the countenance of Him whose thought was ever the honour and glory of God and the good of men.

There is an old and beautiful legend that when the men of Nazareth, where our Lord was brought up, were in trouble, they used to say, "Let us go and look on Mary's Son." There was a power in the face of Him Who lived so pure and holy and good a life. It did men good even to look on Him. And we must have seen sometimes dimly, in the faces of our brother men, that which has been an inspiration to us in the time of hard duty, or a comfort in time of sore trouble. The human face is, in some cases, a manifestation of the tenderness, kindness, and sympathy that is within. Then there is the other side; the face very often expresses the self within, in a very terrible way. There are faces that tell of awful secret sin; there are faces that tell of inward greed and covetousness—the clamorous cry, "Give, give," is stamped on the very countenance; and there are other faces that tell of a sharp or sulky temper—the pinched lips the sour mouth, the sharp nose are self-expressions of a terrible kind. They tell us a plain story about the hell that exists in many a house. And so, again, pride fixes itself, not only in the countenance, but in the walk of the man as he struts down the street; while on the other hand, look how deeply meekness and gentleness fix themselves in the faces of some ministering women as they go upon their errands of mercy, or how highest beauty shines through the face of

some Apostle of truth, whose face, like Stephen's, is "as the face of an angel." The highest view of the body, then, is that it is a means of self-expression. At present we see this dimly and darkly, but hereafter we shall see it plainly and clearly. The resurrection of the body, then, is not the revivification of the material particles of this body, which perish even while we speak, but the rising again of all that belongs to the essence of the personality of each one. Here on earth we see the body in its weakness; we see it even at best marred with imperfection; we see it limited by the circumstances of earth "sown in corruption, sown in weakness," but there we shall see it "raised in power and glory" that is undreamt and unthought of here.

And self-expression will then be unhindered; the present antagonism, with which we are familiar, between the flesh and the spirit, will altogether cease. There is, we know, many of us to our cost, at the present time a latent antagonism within ourselves; we not only have to "wrestle against principalities, and powers, and against rulers of darkness in this world;" we not only have to fight against the corrupt tendencies of the world-spirit, but we have also an enemy within us. In times of weariness, in times of temptation we have to wrestle against an internal foe. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." No

doubt we have to guard here against the exaggeration that has spoken of the body as though it were the only source of temptation. Men have taken the mis-translated words of St. Paul, "our vile body," * and depreciated the body as though there were something inherently bad about it. But, apart from all exaggeration of this kind, we are conscious that "there is a law in our members that wars against the law of God." Of this antagonism between flesh and spirit, however caused, there will one day be an end. No longer will the body be in any way a limitation of the spirit, still less will it in any way act by way of temptation to the higher nature. The body will be the perfect self-expression of the inmost spirit; the power by which we act, the power by which we feel, the power by which we think, the power by which we hold communion with God and with men, will find a new and harmonious method of expression in the resurrection life.

This, then, we have seen: first of all, that the resurrection of the body will be a resurrection of a perfect means of self-expression; and then that the spirit will no longer find any antagonistic force at work in that body with which it is clothed.

2. Again, one of our great present difficulties is to

* "The body of our humiliation" would be a more accurate rendering of the original.

balance individual and social virtues, to preserve our individuality without being selfish, to distinguish between selfishness and the preservation of that right independence and that development of one's own individuality, which it is the highest duty of man to assert and promote. The difficulty is to balance the individual claims and the claims of fellowship one with the other, and to do so without, on the one hand, destroying strong personalities, or, on the other, disregarding social duties. But when the depths of life open before us in the world beyond, then at last we shall see how it is possible not to lose one's self in the sense of losing one's individuality, and yet at the same time to be always contributing to a living unity composed of one's self and of those around.

On the whole subject let us never lose sight of St. Paul's great analogy about the resurrection body and the present body, as a thing which every man who takes his walks in the fields can think out for himself. It is clear enough ; just as the grain that was sown in the field is to the wheat harvest, so is your present body to the resurrection body ; and this will illustrate our first thought. For what is the corn in the field when it becomes the wheat in the ear ? It is self-expression, the perfect self-expression, the developed self-expression of the seed. If you cling to the figure about the seed and the fruit, your difficulty about the

resurrection of the flesh will pass away. Distinctly it is put before us that we sow, "not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body;" that is to say, to the apple seed the body of the apple tree, and to the acorn the body of the oak tree; the seed determines the plant. You do not get apples out of acorns, and you do not get wheat ears out of barley seed. So with our present life. The character that is being formed in the present time will no doubt give the form of our future self-expression; but our present bodies do not contain the body of the resurrection. The grain in the ear is not the seed, but the seed dies even here below that it may clothe itself in a nobler form. So there will be physical continuity of some kind, no doubt: but not continuity of construction: rather "the continuity of evolution." The relation between the body hereafter and in the present is the relation of the ripe fruit to the imperfect seed. This meets the querulous objection that is apt to assert itself sometimes: "I should not want to go on living for ever with this kind of body; the continuance of it would be a monotonous thing; I should get tired of it." There is a time, I suppose, when we are all very tired of ourselves; there is a time when perhaps our nervous system is low and

depressed, and we feel weary of ourselves and of the monotony of existence, and that without having anything the matter with us, or any real trouble as a burden; and to look forward to continuous monotony is a terrible thing. Men have been found to say that they would sooner face extinction than a monotonous existence. But Revelation gives no countenance to the dark imagination of unvaried monotony. On the contrary, when you take the analogy of the fruit and the seed, there rises up a vision of a perpetual and yet a varied and an ennobled existence, the thought of which is meant to be and serves as an inspiration, in all the dark moments of life.

And this consideration disposes of the misgiving that sometimes haunts us about the inhabitants of heaven. We people heaven with the poor imperfect beings whom we know in the world, and we feel a repugnance to their perpetual society. We take the idea of those who vex and worry us now, and think of having to live eternally with them in their vexing and worrying condition! But what is it that offends us with them? Is it what is good, and brave, and noble, and generous, and forbearing about them? Surely not. It is their "often infirmities" which vex us more than their excellencies charm us. Let the Apostle speak to dispel our unworthy fears and misgivings: "It is sown in corruption" (the corrup-

tion of infirmity—of the things that vex and annoy us); “it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

3. Once more, there are words in the Bible about “entering into life maimed,” like a tree shorn of some of its beauty which belonged to it. “Entering into life maimed,” what does it mean? Surely it indicates a real danger that we may so misuse our powers here, that although we may be “saved as by fire,” yet we may enter into life without those full powers of which the seed was cast unto us by God. And it is well to dwell on the fact that this applies, not only to our spiritual powers, but also to our intellectual faculties. God has given varied talents to men for present use, and to add to their future blessedness; just as God has given opportunities for social usefulness here which will find a wider sphere there. According to the lives we live now we shall be hereafter. Everything here goes into that self-expression, which is to be there declared and manifested.

Surely this gives us a deepened sense of our responsibility and opportunities here. It gives us a new desire to use every opportunity of self-cultivation, every means of self-restraint that we can, so that we may not injure our powers here and find

ourselves entering into life maimed hereafter. Ah, brethren, it must be an awful thing to think that you and I may here and now do that which might for ever leave some stain upon us. May God help us all to hallow the "temples of our bodies ;" may God help us so to believe in the Holy Ghost, so to believe in His work in the forgiveness of sins, that that same Spirit Who dwelt in Christ and raised Him up from the dead, may so quicken our mortal bodies that we, being crucified and buried with Him here, may find, by His grace, hereafter our complete and perfect self-expression in our joyful resurrection.

SERMON XXI.

THE LIFE ETERNAL.

“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.”—ST. JOHN xvii. 3.

WE come to the closing words of our Creed : “I believe in the life eternal ;” that is to say, we believe that man, made in the image of God, will enter into the life of God. As we sum up all our belief in Christ’s work by saying that we believe that He will come again to judge both the quick and the dead, so we sum up all our belief in the Holy Ghost by saying that we believe in the resurrection of the body ; and this universal judgment and this personal resurrection together prepare for the consummation of all things—for that new heaven and that new earth, for that full knowledge of God, which, under another name, we call the life everlasting or the life eternal. “I believe in eternal life.”

1. What is the meaning of “eternal”? The answer, I suppose, of the ordinary man would be, “Something

which lasts for ever." With him eternity would simply mean endless time; it would mean duration of permanence, or endless succession, or unalterability; it would mean adding so much time together that you could add no more. And so the sort of metaphors that people have used to express eternity have been the metaphors of the circle or the sand on the sea-shore. We have all been told, that if we tried to count the sand on the sea-shore we should never reach the idea of eternity. Now, that sort of language is eminently misleading. Eternity is not merely extended time. "Time shall be no more." That "phantom of succession of time" is wholly inapplicable to the life of God. With God there is no time—no past, no future; all is the everlasting now. It is only in consequence of our present limitations, only in consequence of that great condition of time under which we live, that we are unable to think of God as living out of time, and that we are compelled to think of Him as living only in endless time. The life eternal is the real life; it is the life that is life indeed. The contrast between the life of the age to come (to use the expression of the Nicene Creed) and the life of this age is not in its endlessness so much as in its intensity, in its complete reality. Here in this life we are hemmed in on every side; there are limitations set to our approach to absolute perfection.

That this is true as regards knowledge of all kinds every one admits ; but it is true also as regards conduct. The man who tries to regulate his conduct most entirely by realizing the highest principles of Christ, of love for his fellow-men, of justice and truth, finds that there is just a point beyond which he cannot get ; he finds that though he may, and will, succeed to a certain extent, yet he is always falling short of an absolute ideal. It is the common experience of life that in everything—in knowledge, in conduct, in capacity—you are shut in by limitations. Any man who has got his heart in his work, whatever that work may be, sees things he would like to do very much indeed, but which he cannot hope to do ; he becomes conscious, as it were, of an iron door of limitation closed in his face. The great difference between the life of the age to come and the life of this age lies in this, that in that age there will not be these limitations. Knowledge will be perfect. Integrity of conduct will be entire. Every single capacity, which man has, will not only find its proper field and use, but also be a source of fresh pleasure and joy to him. To think of eternity in that way is quite different from thinking of it as a monotonous succession of endless time. Eternity is intensity ; eternity is in being, not in length of time ; for eternity puts us into the region beyond time, out

of time, into the region in which things *are* and do not merely seem to be.

Again, eternity is knowledge of the highest kind ; so our Lord says, "This is life eternal, . . . to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." He could not have used words which would be more inconsistent with the popular idea of eternity, as being endlessness, than these. The popular account would be, "This is life eternal to have life settled and undisturbed for ever ;" but Christ says, "This is life eternal, . . . to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent ;" *i.e.* eternal life consists in knowing God and Christ. Again, in another place, in 1 St. John v. 20, when he is analyzing the idea of eternal life, he says in the same way "that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life ;"—thus making, again, the essential idea of eternal life to be knowledge. "Eternal life is that knowledge of God which is perpetual communion with Him."* Eternal life is the knowledge of God, not as a thing to come, but as a thing which is. And to know God means to know everything. All wisdom rests in God, and therefore to know God is to

* Westcott, "The Historic Faith."

know everything. To know Him is not only to know One Who is perfectly good, but it is to know One in Whom also are hid "all the treasures of wisdom."

These two ideas, then, we have about eternity, that it is intensity, and that it is perfected knowledge of God, and of all things in God.

Once more, this eternal life is always represented as being in Christ. And to have fellowship with Christ is, as St. John says, to have "fellowship with one another." Therefore the third idea of eternity is unhindered fellowship. The desire for fellowship here and now is hindered in all sorts of ways; it is at perpetual war with our own desire for self-cultivation. When a man becomes conscious of his own personality, his first thought is how he can improve himself. He sets to work and studies, but he soon becomes conscious that over against this self-improvement, this desire to lock his door and shut himself up with his books, this energy of self-development, there is a call for service to his fellow-men—there is the fact that he can be of use to others. The difficulty of keeping the balance between the preservation of your own individuality and the living in fellowship with other Christians, and doing what you can for the service of God and man, is very great; in fact, it is one of the great difficulties of life. On the one hand, you cannot say, "I will

simply improve myself, and leave other people alone," because you are a Christian, and we Christians are "members one of another;" on the other hand, you cannot say, "My gifts shall perish and be buried, and I will go and live for the service of my fellow-men," because you feel that you have a responsibility for those gifts, and that, after all, in the last resort you would be of very little use for the service of God or man, if you left off cultivating your mind. The difficulty here and now is inevitable, but in the life of the world to come that difficulty will not arise. That life will be a corporate life, a life to which each separate life will consciously contribute, and yet individually remain unimpaired; each separate life will come to its own perfection.

Here, then, are three thoughts about eternity: Eternal life (1) is the real life; (2) it is complete knowledge of God issuing in unhindered fellowship; (3) it is complete fellowship with one another in God.

2. Then, let us consider this. According to the Creed we believe in life, not in death. This belief in life needs to be insisted on; for many Christians, it is to be feared, believe more in death than in life. Men believe in life perhaps for themselves and those who agree with them; they believe in life for the orthodox, and death for all else. Or, if they escape this narrowness, they prove in other ways that they really believe

in death. To believe that the way to make people good is to frighten them well, is to believe in death. The attempt to terrify and drive people into heaven by pictures like those drawn in Dante's "Inferno" is founded on a belief in death. Christ did not come to say, "I am come to frighten people to death, that they may be brought into life;" but He said, "I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." We Christians of the nineteenth century have not proclaimed this as St. John did, and we suffer for it. Who shall say how much of failure on the part of Christians is due to this want of preaching "life" as St. John taught it?

We believe, then, in eternal life. The question must come: Will life eventually overcome death? Is life the last solution of all things? Is that "restitution of all things" spoken of in the Acts as the aim of all human efforts to be realized? Is it the case that finally life, as we have just been singing,* will conquer death? Or does this doctrine of life eternal which the Church puts before us leave room for the exclusion of what is perpetually opposed to God? Does it leave room for the exclusion from God of something which is never to be reached by God? Must we believe that evil is to be as enduring as God is? Such questions ought to make us feel very humble,

* In Gounod's beautiful anthem, "From Thy love as a Father."

very conscious of our own limitations. To answer them in a glib fashion, or so as to support a theological position, is to show a temper unworthy alike of the real inquirer and of the awful nature of the subject. If we could tell how evil arose, if we had any knowledge how this intrusive element found its way into the works of a good God, we might be in a position to discuss how and when it was going to end. But there we are absolutely in the dark. "There was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels." So we are told, and it means something very real; but what does it tell us which can be said to add to our knowledge of the origin of evil? Here is our difficulty. If we knew how evil began, we might be able to say something positive about its end; but we know nothing of its origin. Here is this hideous thing, with consequences which are perpetual as far as we can see—is it going to last for ever, to defy God in the last instance? Who can answer? Our only solace in the darkness is in the last words of our Creed: "I believe in eternal life."

There are those who confidently assert that the everlasting existence of evil and of consequent misery is an integral portion of God's Revelation. But as far as I know, they never attempt to face the real difficulties of their position, they never answer the

mother's cry, "How am I to be happy in heaven while my child is in misery in hell?" The difficulty is felt in the hearts of those of their hearers who think things out, and who cannot see the possibility of a happy hereafter for themselves, while others, whom they love, are for ever miserable. In the old days there used to be teachers who, perhaps more consistently, met the difficulty in this way. They said that part of the joy of the saints would be to gaze on the tortures of those who are lost ! To that horrible position there is one preliminary objection—that it is inconsistent with any real belief in eternal life ; it is inconsistent with any belief in a developed and perfected life ; for it is a belief in a life there, which is much more maimed than the life which we live now. Of course there are people sometimes so wicked and bad that they can rejoice at seeing their enemies in pain. Of course people can be found who will rush to see some exhibition of pain inflicted on others, such as an execution or a flogging ; but to hold that up to us as a state of mind that shall characterize the best people hereafter is an intolerable thing. One can only suppose that religious people who were hard driven to explain their own difficulties, adopted that supposition as the only way they could devise of cutting the knot ; but to escape a difficulty, by spreading the belief that the best and noblest

and purest of mankind would be able permanently to cherish this most despicable feeling, is as unworthy as it is unreasonable. It belongs to the moral level of those days when they used to "burn men's bodies for the good of their souls."

The whole question is full of darkness and difficulty. Do those who talk so glibly about everlasting punishment ever think what this perpetuated rebellion against God really means, viz. that Christ's ultimate kingdom will be confronted with the undying war of a powerless antagonism? Those, again, who tell us that God will use His Almighty power against evil, and conquer it by converting it into good, what difficulties they raise! Has any man a right to say that this is clear from God's Revelation? All we can say is that we know far too little to pronounce a final judgment on so mysterious a subject. What do we know of the possibilities of God's purifying love in the world beyond? * We know something here of the tremendous possibilities of self-sacrificing love, but what human love can be compared to the love of God? And what do we know of the future methods of the purifying love of God? We know far, far too little for us ever to say anything that would shut the door on hope, or, on the other hand, encourage mere presumption. It seems to me

* Cf. Church's Sermon "Life and Judgment."

that the mere reserve of the Bible as to the state after judgment, is more worthy of our humble imitation than the boldness of some of our most confident modern teachers.

One may state the difficulty, but one must leave it there. On the one hand, you can read plainly in the Bible that the consequences of unrepented sin follow us after this life ; that there is a sin which our Lord has spoken of, and which St. John has spoken of, which is said to be without forgiveness, to have "no forgiveness either in this world or in the world to come," whatever that may mean. Again, Christ Himself speaks of a "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched" as a consequence of unrepented sin. He must have meant something. On the other hand, there are His words, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ;" and St. Paul's declaration of God's intention to sum up all in Christ, and "reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in heaven or in earth." You have a passage that tells of death being "swallowed up in victory," and another that speaks of this as the final goal of things, that "God may be all in all." There are the two sides, the apparent contradiction, the insoluble paradox. It is well at times to dwell on the fact that the consequences of unrepented sin follow us hereafter ; yet, on the other hand, it is surely good



to dwell on the fact that God has said that He will "reconcile all things unto Himself," that even "death will be swallowed up in victory," and that "God will be all in all." As long as we keep both sides before us, the one checks us when we are tempted, while the other raises us up when we are out of heart. In the presence of this insoluble problem we fall back on the Church's Creed, "I believe in eternal life"—in life that is life indeed, in life that is complete, in life in communion with God; and that, without endeavouring to solve insoluble things, and without endeavouring to forestall the way in which God may bring about life as a final end of all things. We bow our heads and we veil our faces before an insoluble mystery, and as a practical result to-night let us ask God on our knees, more earnestly than we have ever asked Him yet, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

THE END.



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The Apostles' creed

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